"ASSERTION-THROUGH-STRUCTURE":
SOME FORMAL CONSIDERATIONS
IN THE FICTION OF
THOMAS PYNCHON

by

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Pynchon's early fiction establishes the idea of "social thermodynamics"; events in society are subject to impulses of decay parallel to entropy. The human condition is composed of extremes, the "street" and the "hothouse," i.e., synchronic and diachronic modes of perception; and both for contrasting reasons are inadequate.

The second chapter discusses the problem of metaphor and its limitations in dealing with the world. Metaphor for Pynchon in V. is a deception; this is contrasted with Emerson's use of metaphor to define human activity. In V., metaphor is the basis of constructing patterns, and patterns ultimately falsify the world they are intended to order.

Chapter three discusses "Mondaugen's Story" as a micro-cosm of V.; "Mondaugen's Story" is a parable of Wittgenstein's first proposition; Pynchon's fiction is compared to propositions, since both undergo a projective relation to the world. Both V. and the Tractatus are "hollow" works, denying their own media.

Chapter four develops the metaphor of the interface in Gravity's Rainbow; because based on a physical phenomenon, it is an externally observable metaphor, and consequently is not subject to the distrust elicited by Stencil's V-symbols. The novel's interfaces appear first in a psychological context, and then
are extended to "different orders of reality." Pynchon, through a process of establishing realistic fictional illusions only to break them, sets up and breaks the interface of his fiction.

Chapter five considers an interface of some importance, deferred from chapter four, film: film provides a referent inside the novel for the processes of art as they affect the lives and behavior of the characters. By its use of film devices, the novel shapes how we perceive its structure and thus meaning; paradoxically, film is both an expression of communal dreams or fantasies and an individual, one-to-one address.

Chapter six develops the concept of the Zone as interface. The Zone is the occupied territories after Germany's fall, a system of provisional reality and thus of infinite possibility, and a means of suggesting the need for systems and the difficulty of constructing them. Slothrop's disappearance is one mode of dealing with paranoia and limiting systems. The Zone finally is a metaphor for contingent existence.
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Now there grows among all the rooms, replacing the night's old smoke, alcohol and sweat, the fragile, musaceous odor of Breakfast: flowery, permeating, surprising, more than the color of winter sunlight, taking over not so much through any brute pungency or volume as by the high intricacy to the weaving of its molecules, sharing the conjuror's secret by which—though it is not often Death is told so clearly to fuck off—the living genetic chains prove even labyrinthine enough to preserve some human face down ten or twenty generations... so the same assertion—through-structure allows this war morning's banana fragrance to meander, repossess, prevail. Is there any reason not to open every window, and let the kind scent blanket all Chelsea? As a spell, against falling objects...

—Gravity's Rainbow
INTRODUCTION:

Thomas Pynchon's novels demonstrate an intense consciousness of form: this thesis is a tenuous examination of a unifying principle in _Gravity's Rainbow_, Pynchon's 400,000-word novel, published in 1973—a recurrent metaphor, and structural principle, the metaphor of the interface. In order to discuss Pynchon's use of the interface metaphor in _Gravity's Rainbow_ it will be necessary to examine his early fiction—three short stories and _V._—for a sense of his development of the novel form. In order to consider Pynchon's fictional forms the thesis will attempt to encompass the significance of metaphor and the act of metaphor in Pynchon's two large novels. Metaphor in _V._ is a process to be inherently distrusted, as we shall see; but in _Gravity's Rainbow_ Pynchon is able to develop a coherent, unifying metaphor organic to the novel's material.

Through metaphor similarities between disparate objects are perceived: thus "the sun is an orange" allows the maker of the comparison to note shape and color, and to visualize a miniscule "earth" around the fruit in his hand. In any literal sense, however, the comparison is an absurdity; and in the figurative sense, in the quality of the metaphor itself, "the sun is an orange" is an anthropomorphic act, which brings an astronomical fact into something which can be held in three fingers, tossed, and squeezed into breakfast—in effect brings the thing
metaphored under human control. Metaphor in the most general sense enables us to shape things into a coherent, comprehensible order; it is the fabric whereby web-like patterns of interpretation are built up. Pynchon's concept of metaphor in V. is that metaphor is a human imposition of pattern upon events which themselves exist in no pattern: therefore metaphor is an "artifice," one which contributes to "the Great Lie."  

Nevertheless, it is impossible for us not to impose patterns: to live without a concept of form invites dread, paranoia, insanity. The mind compulsively makes patterns of unpatterned events, just as in sensory deprivation experiments the mind projects the appearance of stimuli.

The metaphors in V. are not organically related to the perception; rather than rising from perception, they channel the perception, until the book's pattern-maker, significantly named Stencil, sees the world in terms of the initial V: the unity and cohesion derivable from form are characterized for Stencil by the great plot of the century, into which everything beginning with "V" is enrolled. The uncertainty is compounded if we note that language assumes a form in the phenomena which it describes; in bringing the things of the world into consciousness, language arranges them into some ordered form. For Wittgenstein this implies the existence of form in the world, which is imitated by this function of language; for Pynchon the form is imposed by language and by human perception, but form itself does not exist intrinsically in phenomena.

There is the danger, then, that metaphor is entirely a trick of the mind, that the relations it perceives between dis-
parate objects exist only in the mind of the perceiver. Just as in solipsism, one cannot verify his perceptions because he cannot place himself outside their influence. As Wittgenstein puts it, "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world." ²

But in Gravity's Rainbow, Pynchon finds a metaphor that is externally verifiable: Pavlov's experiments with conditioning show to another organism that an act of association has taken place. In the experiment a bell is rung, the dog is shown food, and the dog salivates. Eventually at the sound of the bell the dog salivates, without the presence of food. Between the stimulus and the response, an act of metaphor has taken place: the bell is somehow like food. At least one metaphor, then, has been observed from the outside, and therefore the problem of subjectivity implied in the concept of metaphor in V. is circumscribed.

The metaphor of the interface in Gravity's Rainbow derives from such an account of Pavlovian conditioning in the novel, and from there expands into a unifying concept—I hesitate to call it a symbol—for consideration of the novel as a whole. The interface is not exactly a symbol; rather it is a spatial construct, just as is the V-symbol in V. The significance of that novel's Vs is suspect, since they are unified by coincidence, not through organic development, and since they center around the consciousness of one character, Stencil; the interfaces of Gravity's Rainbow, however, are organically developed through the novel and have physical validation in its esthetic space. Indeed, the novel itself is a kind of interface with the ex-
ternal world it addresses itself to; consequently the interface allows a more secure grasp on the world itself. *Gravity's Rainbow* is not, as *V.* and *The Crying of Lot 49* are, threatened with the dilemma between senseless, random data and solipsism.

This thesis has grown out of a paper done for a class in twentieth-century American fiction; the thesis' crucial chapter is the expanded version of this paper presented in the fourth chapter. The preceding chapters develop concepts useful in discussing that novel, and the last two chapters expand on two particular uses of the device deserving further discussion. The first three chapters moreover are intended to prepare for the considerable shift in Pynchon's novelistic vision between *The Crying of Lot 49* and *Gravity's Rainbow*: the discussion of the short stories in the first chapter introduces Pynchon's adaptation of literary, historical, and scientific-technological material into his fiction, through a consideration of Henry Adams, and suggests the possibility of fiction as parable. The second and third chapters deal with *V.* in order to establish background for *Gravity's Rainbow*. The second chapter is on metaphor in *V.*, based on Fausto Maijstral's confessions in that novel; metaphor makes possible the construction of patterns, which make sense of the world, but such patterns are in Pynchon's view inadequate to and inherently falsifying of the world as it is. The concept of the Poet as Liar is contrasted with the Emersonian view that the poet (man) is at the center of the universe, and relates and by that relation gives significance to all things. The third chapter is concerned with Wittgenstein
and "Mondaugen's Story," in _V._, in which the message decoded from the monitored radio disturbances is the first proposition of Wittgenstein's _Tractatus_—"The world is all that is the case." The implications of this statement are that there is no inherent meaning to the events of the chapter, a conclusion which may be more frightening than if there were, a point developed in _Gravity's Rainbow_. Some comparison is made between Wittgenstein's specialized terms in the _Tractatus_ and _V._ itself, with the conclusion that Pynchon intends something like Wittgenstein's "projection" to occur between the novel and the "real world."

The last three chapters of the thesis deal with _Gravity's Rainbow_ proper; _The Crying of Lot 49_ has been omitted from consideration for reasons of space, and because the substance of Pynchon's pre-_Gravity's Rainbow_ fiction can be covered in a discussion of _V._ Relevant examples from _The Crying of Lot 49_ are worked into the fabric of the other chapters, without devoting a chapter specifically to that novel. The fourth chapter, on the interface, was mentioned above; it is an exposition of the various and subtle ways in which the term, and the concept without the term, occur within and help to structure the novel. The last two chapters bring out aspects of two important interfaces not covered in the fourth chapter, film and the Zone. Film in _Gravity's Rainbow_ can be seen as an interface in that it mediates between two "levels of reality," the filmed and the audience. Film is important to _Gravity's Rainbow_ because it provides an image for the workings of the novel itself in the "real world." _Gravity's Rainbow_ itself constitutes a pastiche
of film, and thus how we interpret the film medium within the novel affects how we view the novel itself. The last chapter considers the significance of the Zone itself, the geographical area in which most of the novel is set. The Zone is an area of vast possibility and danger— an area of provisional reality. This chapter provides a discussion of Slothrop's dissolution and its meaning to the novel: the novel invites a holistic perception of itself as text to the world proper, to all that "is the case."

The thesis itself is baldly exploratory, its intent being to open questions on this very complex novel to discussion, rather than to express a definitive conclusion on what has proven to be, in a favorite critical cliché, labyrinthine. Following a hint from Henry Adams, rather than approach a complex subject simply, I have elected to attempt inadequately several important considerations to the work as a whole, in hopes that finer discriminations may follow.
Notes to Introduction:

I: ARABESQUES OF ORDER: THOMAS PYNCHON'S SHORT STORIES

Pynchon's short stories provide excellent models of what will be his primary fictional concerns in the novels which follow; the three stories to be discussed here, "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna," "Low-lands," and "Entropy," suggest convenient points of departure for important motifs of the fiction. "Entropy" establishes the concept of "social thermodynamics," adapted from The Education of Henry Adams; "Low-lands" provides a vehicle for discussion of Pynchon's characteristic style, the free-flowing mixture of concerns from a multiplicity of disciplines; and "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna" extends the fictional parable to information theory. All three stories derive their structures from a series of contrasted states and oscillation between these states. "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna" was published in 1959, "Entropy" and "Low-lands" in 1960, and "Under the Rose," which became a chapter of V., in 1961; but regardless of whether the first three short stories were written prior to concurrently with Pynchon's first novel, they illustrate emerging concerns in his fiction.

In Pynchon's early fiction appears the conceit that human beings may be considered subject to statistical laws of behavior governing gases: since men in masses are subject to laws of statistics, and since gases too are subject to laws of statistics, it follows—in this conceit—that men may be written about as if they were gases. The same type of reasoning from analogy occurs in such phenomena as social Darwinism; and fallacious as the
syllogism may be, it nonetheless can serve as the basis for fiction. The application of laws of science to human behavior was a motivating force in the development of psychology and the social sciences, and a principal historian dealing with statistical concepts of behavior was Henry Adams, a considerable influence in Pynchon's fiction up to and through V.

Adams' vision of Western society in the early years of the century was one of increasing chaos: "Chaos was the law of nature; Order was the dream of man," he noted; This motif was derived from the second law of thermodynamics, which states that closed systems tend towards states of greater disorder—a concept he applied to the increasing multiplicity he saw as the historical movement of Western culture. In order to have a measure of relative unity for comparison, Adams produced a study of twelfth-century European civilization, that century being in his judgment the period when human endeavors, religious and secular, artistic and mercantile, reached their highest point of integration. Adams wrote in The Education, "Any schoolboy could see that man as a force must be measured by motion, from a fixed point. Psychology helped here by suggesting a unit—the point of history when man held the highest idea of himself as a unit in a unified universe. Eight or ten years of study had led Adams to think he might use the century 1150-1250, expressed in Amiens Cathedral and the Works of Thomas Aquinas, as the unit from which he might measure motion down to his own time, without assuming anything as true or untrue, except relation." Adams' symbols for the relative states of unity and multiplicity, within the two time periods, were the Virgin and the dynamo—
the Virgin for Adams uniting the energies and devotions of all of medieval Europe, the dynamo symbolizing all the diversity and electro-mechanical force which for Adams characterized twentieth-century Western civilization.

Reincarnations of Henry Adams occur in Pynchon's fiction: one is Herbert Stencil in *V.*, whose pursuit of the novel's elusive "V-ness"—both mysterious lady and the motivating force (in both of Adams' senses) behind "the century's master cabal," and the consequent unity provided by having an explanation for all the symptoms of decadence Stencil finds within the events of that novel—is very like Adams' quest for the Virgin and the knowledge of unity that symbol implies for him. Stencil is a caricature of Henry Adams, i.e., a parody of the historian in pursuit of the ultimate key to his data. Stencil like Adams arranges about himself a history: "Historians undertake to arrange sequences,—called stories, or histories—assuming in silence a relation of cause and effect." Stencil assumes a system of cause and effect in his quest (as will be seen in a subsequent chapter); another historian in the Adams mode in Pynchon's fiction is Callisto, from "Entropy."

Callisto's explanation for what he sees as the disintegration of his world is based on Adams' application of statistics and laws of science to human events:

"Nevertheless," continued Callisto, "he found in entropy or the measure of disorganization for a closed system an adequate metaphor to apply to certain phenomena in his own world. He saw, for example, the younger generation responding to Madison Avenue with the same spleen his own had once reserved for Wall Street, and in American 'consumerism' discovered a similar tendency from the least to the most probable. . . . He found himself, in short, restating Gibbs' prediction in social terms, and envisioned
a heat-death for his culture in which ideas, like heat-energy, would no longer be transferred, since each point in it would ultimately have the same quantity of energy, and intellectual motion would, accordingly, cease.

(Callisto throughout the story speaks of himself in the third person, just as Stencil does in V. and just as Adams does in The Education of Henry Adams.) The brilliance of this passage is in its pastiche of Adams, and in the fact that Callisto himself evidences the same slippage he sees about him in American society, the same slippage Adams notes in discussing his own genealogy. Adams, the grandson and great-grandson of presidents, was the fourth son of Charles Francis Adams, ambassador to England during the Civil War; in The Education of Henry Adams he considers himself as the end product of the fall of a great house, in an equivalent decline to that of Callisto's social heat-death. Moreover, the traditional Adams feud with "State Street," i.e., the mercantile interests of Boston, has degenerated similarly in Pynchon's story, first into Callisto's "Wall Street" and then into the current generation's "Madison Avenue." The progression from stately Bostonian finance to stock market to advertising agency is an appropriate one. The very fact of the distance from Henry Adams to the schlemiel-like Callisto and Stencil is an illustration of the leveling of ideas Callisto maintains is occurring.

But the Henry Adams character in "Entropy" provides only one-half of the plot: interspersed with Callisto's theorizations about the meaning of history are quasi-apocalyptic interruptions from Meatball Mulligan's "lease-breaking party" downstairs.
The party is a common device in Pynchon's fiction: it allows easy introduction of diverse types of characters, who can be juxtaposed for comic effect; and it provides a temporary enclave which can embody the example of social thermodynamics which Callisto notes in his memoirs. This party features sailors, philosophy majors, avant-garde musicians—fictional types Pynchon must have encountered in the Navy or at Cornell. Noises from downstairs increase and decrease more or less at random, depending on the characters' stupor and the rambunctiousness of new arrivals; upstairs, Callisto and his mistress Aubade are trying desperately to maintain an extreme degree of order in his greenhouse-apartment. Having noticed that the temperature in Washington has remained constant at 37° for three days straight, Callisto has concluded that the universal heat-death has arrived, and has secluded himself from the threatened end by phoning out for meals—trying meanwhile to revive a dying bird held between his palms. Justification for the paradigm of the story comes, again, from a passage from Henry Adams: "Every fabulist has told how the human mind has always struggled like a frightened bird to escape the chaos which caged it; how—appearing suddenly and inexplicably out of some unknown and unimaginable void; . . . after sixty or seventy years of growing astonishment, the mind wakes to find itself looking blankly into the void of death." Here can be seen Pynchon's comic device of literalizing the metaphor, a type of invention frequent throughout his work.

The metaphors Pynchon uses to describe the extreme poles of
human experience exemplified in "Entropy"—corresponding to
Adams' dynamo and Virgin—are the street and the hothouse. The
street is characterized by unbounded multiplicity and ease of
movement, but also features a high state of disorder, relatively
random occurrences, and potential for either favorable events
or catastrophes. The hothouse represents the polar opposite
of the street: that is, a state of enclosure which enables the
character to draw order from the chaos of the past; but its
disadvantages are restricted movement and isolation from
current events. Pynchon characterizes the two conditions in
V.: "After that long of more named pavements than he'd care to
count, Profane had grown a little leery of streets, especially
streets like this. They had in fact all fused into a single
abstracted Street, which come the full moon he would have night¬
mares about. . . . overhead, turning everybody's face green and
ugly, shone mercury-vapor lamps, receding in an asymmetric V
to the east where it's dark and there are no more bars."7
This street is further glossed by Fausto Maijstral: "You know
the street I mean, child. The street of the 20th Century, at
whose far end or turning—we hope—is some sense of home or
safety. But no guarantees. A street we are put at the wrong end
of, for reasons best known to the agents who put us there. If
there are agents. But a street we must walk."8 Fausto also
characterizes the hothouse, the condition of isolation:
"Why use the room as introduction to an apologia? Because the
room, though windowless and cold at night, is a hothouse.
Because the room is the past, though it has no history of its
own. Because, as the physical being-there of a bed or horizontal plane determines what we call love; as a high place must exist before God's word can come to a flock and any sort of religion begin; so must there be a room, sealed against the present, before we can make any attempt to deal with the past."^9 In his collection of essays on American fiction, *City of Words*, Tony Tanner characterizes the two states: "The street is the zone of the waking, planning consciousness which, unable to endure the meaninglessness of the absolute present, projects plans into the future or finds plans in the past. The hothouse is the realm of memory where the mind is sealed up in the secretions of its reveries over the past."^10 The street dissipates energy, while the hothouse receives it; the street consequently represents the normal movement towards a higher state of entropy, while the hothouse represents the tendency of life to organize energy into more complicated and useful structures. The metaphor for this process in "Entropy" is that of music; random noise from the party below and the city outside threatens the fragile harmonies of the hothouse plants: "Counterpointed against his words the girl heard the chatter of birds and fitful car honkings scattered along the wet morning and Earl Bostic's alto rising in occasional wild peaks through the floor. The architectonic purity of her world was constantly threatened by such hints of anarchy: gaps and excrescences and skew lines, and a shifting or tilting of planes to which she had continually to readjust lest the whole structure shiver into disarray of discrete and meaningless signals."^11 Intrusions from the world outside the hothouse threaten to overwhelm its
structures—a problem which also has its parallel in Adams. "The mind . . . must merge in its supersensual multiverse, or succumb to it." The historian, represented by Callisto in the scheme of the story, provides the structure to bring order to the world; the events of the world, represented by Mulligan's party and all the outside noises which menace Callisto's upstairs room, naturally exist in chaos, tending to counter man's "rage to order." The entropic paradigm applies, as in the passage above, not only to thermodynamics but to communication theory as well.

But Pynchon's extension of Adams' Virgin-dynamo symbols has a further significance in that, rather than representing unity and multiplicity, his symbols characterize processes of ordering and disordering: if the hothouse becomes no longer valid for giving form to human events, the historian—Adams, Pynchon, all makers of fictions—and all makers of metaphors—become pursuers of absurd tasks. The problem of metaphor will be developed more fully in a subsequent chapter. There exists, however, another area in Pynchon's fiction besides the hothouse and street—that found by Dennis Flange in "Low-lands," the area which in \( V. \) becomes "under the street . . . under the Street." Profane, in \( V. \), takes a job in the sewers of New York shooting alligators, in hopes of eluding the randomness which has characterized his life as a self-proclaimed schlemiel; Flange, in "Low-lands," similarly finds a zone underground, an area which affords him possible peace.

The title of "Low-lands" is derived from a discussion of
the significance of "sea level" to Dennis Flange, a passage which provides one of Pynchon's *tours de force*:

Anyone who has looked at the open sea under a special kind of illumination or in a mood conducive to metaphor will tell you of the curious illusion that the ocean, despite its movement, has a certain solidity; it becomes a gray or glaucous desert, a waste land which stretches away to the horizon, and all you would have to do would be to step over the lifelines to walk away over its surface. [. . .] for Flange that immense clouded-glass plain was a kind of low-land which almost demanded a single human figure striding across it for completeness; any arrival at sea level was like finding a minimum and dimensionless point, a unique crossing of parallel and meridian, an assurance of perfect, passionless uniformity; just as in the spiraling descent of Rocco's truck he had felt that this spot at which they finally came to rest was the dead center, the single point which implied an entire low country.  

There is in the common denominator evoked by the "mood conducive to metaphor" some irrational connection between sea, desert, waste land, uniformity, unconsciousness, perhaps still point, as in Eliot's "Four Quartets," and miracle. The style of the passage is a Pynchonian mixture of literary and mathematical modes of perception, assembled in a quasi-Faulknerian sentence which itself is a kind of low-lands, a zone of common ground between a variety of disciplines and cultural experiences—Pynchon participates in a wide range of "language-games," and tends to play several at once, deriving from their superposition new wave-patterns of significance. Low points, still points, and points of isolation all attain particular significance for Pynchon in light of social thermodynamics; the area under the ground, for Flange as well as for Profane, represents an area of solace from the terrors and responsibilities of the street. But the solace is that of illusion. Flange is particularly sensitive to points underground, having chosen his Long Island house in
part for its network of cellars.

Peace in the underground, however, is temporary for the other protagonists in Pynchon's fiction: Profane runs out of alligators and must return to the street for work; Oedipa Maas in *The Crying of Lot 49* considers the community offered by the Tristero system, but can never ascertain whether or not it exists, and wanders through a night in San Francisco in and out of touch with it; and Slothrop in *Gravity's Rainbow* considers for a time living underground with Bianca, but rejects his chance, "and for this he is to be counted, after all, among the Zone's lost."15 Dennis Flange, however, determines to stay in the living space the gypsies have provided beneath the rising level of the junk yard. "'Sure,' he said. 'All right. I'll stay.' For a while, at least, he thought. She looked up gravely. Whitecaps danced across her eyes; sea creatures, he knew, would be cruising about in the submarine green of her heart."16

Pynchon first shows in "Low-lands" the sympathy with the leavings of society, the "preterite" of *Gravity's Rainbow*; Flange is kicked out of his house for associating with Rocco Squarcione, a garbage-man who likes Vivaldi, and Pig Bodine, AWOL from the Navy. The possibility of realizing a kingdom from the waste products of society is exemplified first in Bolingbroke, the proprietor of the junk yard, who protects himself from trespassers with booby traps, and then is more radically represented by the gypsies, who live underneath the rubbish and use it literally as their home. Both Bolingbroke and the gypsies manage to organize the waste products of society, i.e.,
life, into usable form, thus symbolically countering the ran-
domizing effects of entropy. The metaphor most concretely
symbolizing this process in Pynchon's fiction is the compost
heap of Pirate Prentice's hothouse in the second section of
*Gravity's Rainbow*.

In the short stories and in *V*, Pynchon is content to establish
the vision of social entropy; with *The Crying of Lot 49* he gives
fictional form to a (fictional) means of countering the process,
that of Maxwell's Demon. The demon is a hypothesis of Clerk
Maxwell, which by use of information could allow faster-moving
molecules to collect in one cylinder of a machine, while keeping
slower-moving molecules in the other cylinder; thus, from an
initial state of equal temperature, more divergent temperatures
would be established, which could then be used to do work. Thus
the more highly entropic state of equal temperatures could be
changed into free energy. The paradigm doesn't work in fact,
however, since information requires work, i.e. some means of
"seeing" the molecules in order to discriminate between them,
a problem Maxwell didn't recognize. Communication thus becomes
a key concern in Pynchon's fiction in that novel, as well as in
the earlier fiction; and communication is the key focus as well
in Pynchon's first published short story, "Mercy and Mortality
in Vienna."

The story's title is derived from Shakespeare's *Measure
for Measure*, one of the problem comedies, in which Duke Vincentio
deputizes Angelo to clean up the increasingly lawless and
ribald city, giving him the power of life and death.
In our remove be thou at full ourself;
Mortality and mercy in Vienna
Live in thy tongue and heart . . .

But the guiding literary spirits of the story are Conrad and Eliot: the story's protagonist, Cleanth Siegel, meets at a party (he is the first guest) David Lupescu, who is to all appearances his doppelganger. "'Mon semblable . . . mon frère,'" Lupescu says in greeting Siegel, and deputizes him to act as the party's host in his stead. Lupescu leaves Siegel enigmatic instructions for conducting the party which foreshadow the violence to come: "'It's all yours,' he said. 'You are now the host. As host you are a trinity: (a) receiver of guests—'
ticking them off on his fingers—'(b) an enemy and (c) an outward manifestation, for them, of the divine body and blood.'" In departing, Lupescu tells Siegel "'Mistah Kurtz—he dead,'" a line which refers both to Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" and to Eliot's poem "The Hollow Men," which it serves as epigraph. Joseph W. Slade notes that the "Heart of Darkness" allusion "is critical to understanding of the story. Pynchon is invoking Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness,' the literal and psychological jungle 'where doubt itself is lost in an unexplored universe of incertitudes . . . .'" The Eliotic overtones suggest a connection with The Waste Land and the Frazer-Weston archetypes of sacrifice and renewal of the vegetable rites. The role of communication in the story becomes crucial when Siegel, alternating between playing father-confessor in Lupescu's bedroom and genial host for the chaotic party, discovers Irving Loon, an Ojibwa Indian, undergoing what he remembers discussing in an anthropology class as the "Windigo psychosis," a visionary
rite of passage in which the Indian sees his animate surroundings as "beavers," to be hunted. Siegel confirms his hypothesis when he sees Loon loading one of Lupescu's automatic rifles, and having assembled the information, is able to leave before the carnage begins.

In walking out, Siegel rejects the "hothouse" paradigm of isolation characterized in this story by the role of father-confessor, which is likened to that of Kurtz in Conrad's story: "it occurred to [Siegel] now that Lupescu's parting comment had been no drunken witticism; but that the man really had, like some Kurtz, been possessed by the heart of a darkness in which no ivory was ever sent out from the interior, but instead hoarded jealously by each of its gatherers to build painfully . . . each 'agent' in his own ivory tower, having no windows to look out of, turning further and further inward and cherishing a small flame behind the altar. And Kurtz too had been in his way a father confessor."²¹ Siegel in walking out performs a morally ambiguous action: he does not save others, but he does save himself. Similarly, at the end of Chapter One of The Crying of Lot 49, Oedipa is troubled by isolation in a metaphorical tower, an isolation connected with solipsism: "But all that had then gone on between them [Oedipa and Pierce Inverarity] had really never escaped the confinement of that tower. In Mexico City they somehow wandered into an exhibition of paintings by the .beautiful Spanish exile Remedios Varo: in the central painting of a triptych, titled 'Bordando el Manto Terrestre,' were a number of frail girls with heart-shaped faces, huge eyes, spun-gold hair, prisoners in the top room of a circular tower,
embroidering a kind of tapestry which spilled out the slit windows and into a void, seeking hopelessly to fill the void: for all the other buildings and creatures, all the waves, ships and forests of the earth were contained in this tapestry, and the tapestry was the world. . . . Pierce had taken her away from nothing, there'd been no escape." The state of confinement represented in this passage by the tower, or described in Pynchon in V. under the term hothouse, can only be broken, and broken violently, for escape. In "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna" Siegel breaks out by walking away, moments before the executions begin; in "Entropy," Aubade breaks the window and waits for the heat-death to overwhelm them; and in The Crying of Lot 49, Oedipa Maas must act as Pierce Inverarity's executor/-rix.

The counterpoint to isolation is activity within the world of the street. Meatball Mulligan, by the end of "Entropy," has determined to straighten up some of the rowdier elements of his "lease-breaking party": As Siegel does in "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna," he counsels friends, and by the end of the story has decided to "try to keep his lease-breaking party from deteriorating into total chaos." Siegel, similarly, performs some actions to keep order at his party, e.g., he helps a drunk girl who is sitting on the drain in the bathtub and who is consequently afraid of drowning; but by the end of the story he has given up the entire task as in fact hopeless.
Other Pynchon characters who may be said to attempt the same process, i.e., helping to set entropy back a bit in the street, are Rachel Owlglass, whose motherly activities within VIP are virtually the only humane (or human) values to be found within the novel, and Pirate Prentice in Gravity's Rainbow, who before fixing "banana breakfast" breaks Teddy Bloat's fall from a balcony.  

Just as Siegel alternates between confessional and practical modes of dealing with the chaos of Lupescu's party, so the narrative oscillates between hothouse and street conditions; the alternation in "Entropy" is even more pronounced, with the third person narrative juxtapositions between the two halves of the human condition; and "Low-lands" moves within Flange's reminiscences between conditions of flux and stasis. All three stories derive their structures from explicit contrasts closely related to the concepts of the street and the hothouse, a structural method which reaches its apotheosis in VIP, in which the plot divides between Stencil's historical recreations and Profane's present-tense wanderings. In the opposite poles each story's protagonist finds a greater or lesser degree of satisfaction: the hothouse in "Entropy" is broken by Aubade, with a beautiful resolution of the musical metaphors developed throughout the story: "She moved swiftly to the window before Callisto could speak, tore away the drapes, and smashed out the glass with two exquisite hands which came away bleeding and glistening with splinters and turned to face the man on the bed and wait with him until the moment of equilibrium was reached, when thirty-seven degrees Fahrenheit should prevail both outside
and inside, and forever, and the hovering, curious dominant of their separate lives should resolve into a tonic of darkness and the final absence of all motion." Siegel, as has been noted, breaks out of his isolation; and Dennis Flange, starting in such a condition in his life on Long Island, leaves it to find its inverse condition of isolation "under the street," in the gypsies' kingdom beneath the junkyard. Pynchon permits, within his fiction, no possibility of inhabiting the middle ground; the only possible conditions are the street, a condition of extreme chaos, or the hothouse, a condition of extreme isolation; and the fictional method, in the stories as in V., is oscillation between the poles, demonstrating that neither pole is acceptable, and the middle ground between them—Oedipa's "excluded middle"—is structurally impossible to occupy.

Pynchon's innovation in fiction, then, is the adaptation of scientific paradigms, particularly the second law of thermodynamics in its dual applications of thermodynamics and communication theory, into an appropriate metaphor for the contemporary condition. It is necessary, for a full appreciation of the stories and novels, to note the existence of the scheme; but the scheme fulfills for Pynchon what the mythic pattern of the Odyssey provides for Joyce. Leopold Bloom's wanderings within Dublin happen to correspond to Odysseus' travels about the Mediterranean; the contrast between the mythic scaffolding which Joyce constructs and the naturalistic events of Dublin on one day in 1904 provides an implicit, wildly over-extended pun. Pynchon's social thermodynamics is a similar kind of pun, one which he demands should be taken both seriously and comically;
the playfulness results from the literalization into a "real"
hothouse, or a "real" street, while the seriousness comes from
the consequences of the fictional devices turned into actual-
ity. Callisto's "education" is summarized in the significance
of the "undergraduate mnemonic" for remembering the laws of thermo-
dynamics: ". . . you can't win; things are going to get worse
before they get better; who says they're going to get better?
At the age of 54, confronted with Gibbs' notion of the universe,
he suddenly realized that undergraduate cant had been oracle,
after all. That spindly maze of equations became, for him, a
vision of ultimate cosmic heat-death."26 The passage shows both
comic irony and seriousness, within the framework of the story;
and the implications the process has for the human capability
for metaphor are similarly serious.

Merely reading the story and fitting the actions into the
scheme does not do justice to the comic invention or the meta-
phorical tours de force Pynchon brings to bear on his material:
for example, the "music" of Callisto's mimosa trees, juxtaposed
against the random intrusions of noise from beneath:

Outside the temperature remained constant at thirty-
seven degrees Fahrenheit. In the hothouse Aubade stood
absently caressing the branches of a young mimosa, hearing
a motif of sap-rising, the rough and unresolved anticipatory
theme of those fragile pink blossoms which, it is said,
insure fertility. That music rose in a tangled tracery:
arabesques of order competing fugally with the improvised
discords of the party downstairs, which peaked sometimes
in cusps and ogees of noise. That precious signal-to-noise
ratio, whose delicate balance required every calorie of
her strength, seesawed inside the small tenuous skull as
she watched Callisto, sheltering the bird.27

In the interrelation of concepts of communication theory, music,
and what Pynchon later is to call "assertion-through-structure"27
is to be found the measure of Pynchon the maker of metaphors. He explores man's role as pattern-maker through an examination of metaphor in *V*. Man as historian or scientist must produce a pattern for interpretation of the world's random data, and metaphor provides the strands for the web. Having formulated the problem in his short stories—man on statistical levels can be seen as behaving as molecules on statistical levels behave; the choice being between the extremes of the street and the hothouse, between freedom without order or order without energy—Pynchon goes on to investigate the possibility of knowing how masses of men behave, to consider the Heisenberg indeterminacy principle which denies the possibility of a completely objective universe, and to establish the premier fictional consideration of the "airless void"—in summary, to attempt knowledge of the limits of our knowledge, expressed through structure.
Notes to Chapter One:


5. Adams, p. 382.


7. V., p. 2.

8. Ibid., p. 303.


26. Ibid., p. 182.

II: COUNTRY OF COINCIDENCE: METAPHOR IN V.

Werner Heisenberg in the 1920s formulated the indeterminacy principle (also known as the uncertainty principle) in response to a problem in quantum mechanics. The principle, as given in a physics text, is: "It is impossible to know simultaneously and with exactness both the position and the momentum of a particle." In other words, "the uncertainty principle implies that we can never define the path of a particle with the absolute precision postulated in classical mechanics." The implications of this for philosophy are that we no longer can speak of an objective universe, but only of our perceptions of the universe. Consequently a constant of doubt must enter every equation for things as they are; ultimately, the indeterminacy principle negates the possibility that language can deal with the world in any absolute sense. Something analogous to this radical distrust of the perceptual faculties enters into Pynchon's fiction with V. Pynchon's fiction becomes intensely epistemological, portraying in its fabric and its form the attempt to sound out the knowledge of the limits of our knowledge. His doubt in the efficacy of our perceptions emerges within the novel as a consideration of the possibilities and the limitations of metaphor.

There has been a significant change in the meaning and the potentiality of metaphor between the time Emerson penned his essays and the time of V.; consider, in light of the uncertainty principle, the following passage from "Nature":

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Man is an analogist and studies relations in all objects. He is placed in the centre of beings and a way of relation passes from every other being to him. And neither can man be understood without these objects, nor these objects without man. All the facts in natural history, taken by themselves have no value, but are barren like a single sex. But marry it to human history and it is full of life. . . . The instincts of the ant are very unimportant considered as the ant's; but the moment a ray of relation is seen to extend from it to man, and the little drudge is seen to be a monitor, a little body with a mighty heart, then all its habits, even that said to be recently observed, that it never sleeps, become sublime." 3

Emerson, the chief theorist of the nineteenth-century American transcendentalists, takes as his starting point for the definition of metaphor the analogical theory formulated by Aristotle:

"Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy. . . . That from analogy is possible whenever there are four terms so related that the second (B) is to the first (A), as the fourth (D) to the third (C); for one may then metaphorically put D in lieu of B, and B in lieu of D." 4 Emerson's development from the Aristotelian view emphasizes the central position of man: for Emerson all metaphor is centered upon man, and all metaphor is an expression of the analogical procedure, which is just one means of metaphor for Aristotle. Aristotle also suggests the use of metaphor for ornamental purposes, 5 whereas Emerson relies solely upon its analogical function, a concept of metaphor which emphasizes its role in cognition.

When man obeys the injunction of Proverbs, "Go thou to the ant, thou sluggard," and sees in the ant not its own activities but a smaller scale of human attributes, he is viewing
the world in a way Emerson would approve of. Because of his idea of man's centrality in the universe, Emerson could maintain that the world indeed was made for man, and nature acts always to his benefit: "Why should not we also enjoy an original relation to the universe?" Emerson asks in a tone both plaintive and exhortatory. In this original relation to the universe, man integrates its parts into a whole; and the parts evoke within himself, similarly, a holistic order. "The moral law lies at the center of nature and radiates to the circumference. It is the pith and marrow of every substance, every relation, and every process. . . . the sailor, the shepherd, the miner, the merchant, in their several resorts, have each an experience precisely parallel, and leading to the same conclusion: because all organizations are radically alike." What is for Emerson an encouraging state of being, man in the center of a harmonized, beneficent universe, is given far more frightening overtones by Pynchon.

It is the poet, moreover, who provides the observation necessary for the perception of moral order in the cosmos. This key process of integration is asserted from the very beginning of Emerson's essay, and the beneficial aspects of nature are focused on Emerson's representative I: "There is a property in the horizon which no man has but he whose eye can integrate all the parts, that is the poet." The "true theory . . . will explain all phenomena," and the proof of this is the explanation of the beneficial aspect present in nature:
Within these plantations of God, a decorum and sanctity reign, a perennial festival is dressed, and the guest sees not how he should tire of them in a thousand years. In the woods, we return to reason and faith. There I feel that nothing can befall me in life,--no disgrace, no calamity (leaving me my eyes) which nature cannot repair. Standing on the bare ground,--my head bathed by the blithe air and uplifted into infinite space,--all mean egotism vanishes. I become a transparent eyeball; I am nothing; I see all; the currents of the Universal Being circulate through me; I am part or parcel of God. . . .

The greatest delight which the fields and woods minister is the suggestion of an occult relation between man and the vegetable. I am not alone and unacknowledged.

There seems to be a complex of attitudes in Emerson: man orders the universe around himself, yet there is undeniably a universe to be ordered. Emerson flirts with solipsism in such passages, but always comes back to affirm the beneficial powers of nature, apart from whatever qualities the individual ego may bring to it. It is true for Emerson that the world was made for man--and it is equally true that man by his presence and perceptions shapes the world. Both actions are true, and the causality is often confused.

Pynchon, however, radically denies Emerson's thesis that man is at the center and ought to enjoy an original relation with the universe, and that man gives form and substance to all things; and this denial proceeds by reduction to absurdity. "A phrase (it often happened when he was exhausted) kept cycling round and round, preconsciously, just under the threshold of lip and tongue movement: 'Events seem to be ordered into an ominous logic.' It repeated itself automatically and Stencil improved on it each time, placing emphasis on different words--'events seem'; seem to be ordered'; 'ominous logic'--pronouncing them differently, changing the 'tone of voice' from sepulchral
to jaunty: round and round and round. Events seem to be ordered into an ominous logic. He found paper and pencil and began to write the sentence in varying hands and type faces.\textsuperscript{11} Stencil's mantra may be seen as a keystone to the meaning of history for Stencil and for \textit{V}. By the time of \textit{V}, the chronology is no longer in doubt: it is man who brings with him whatever sense of order he finds in the world. The things of the world are interrelated only through the presence of that "transparent eyeball"; their own order is otherwise established without any human intervention or imposed significance for their laws or structures. Wallace Stevens suggests this kind of ordering process in poems such as "Anecdote of the Jar," and indeed approaches Emerson's solipsistic phase in "Tea at the Palaz of Hoon":

\begin{quote}
I was the world in which I walked, and what I saw
Or heard or felt came not but from myself;
And there I found myself more truly and more strange.\textsuperscript{12}
\end{quote}

But for Stevens the ordering function of art is not only necessary but desirable; that is, not only cannot we help but arrange the slovenly wilderness of Tennessee by our artifices, but that relationship is good because human pursuits are good, or art is good. Pynchon's first novel, however, denies the beneficial aspects of an anthropomorphic reading of the universe: the non-human world has its own orders and laws, and men are radically estranged from its sphere. Our perception alters the world, as it is, for us; and the alteration is not a good one. Man for Pynchon is not at the center, but consigned to the periphery.

Metaphor, then, shapes things into a coherent, comprehensible order; and metaphor presupposes a logic in the nature
of things which language, itself an ordered form, imitates in bringing the names of things into consciousness. But if non-human things are formless, if the only laws governing events are those laws that describe random behavior, then there is no form for language to imitate in conveying that state of being. Language then either fails to communicate "what is the case," in Wittgenstein's phrase, or imposes the appearance of order upon phenomena which do not themselves possess form—in essence becomes the "Great Lie" of Fausto Maijstral's journal in V. This is the paradox of metaphor in V: that the novelist can use the basis of his construction to deny the validity of all such constructions. Things do not behave in an orderly fashion, but tend towards a higher state of entropy with time, and thus are less pliable to form; but the human impulse is to find orders, or to impose them where they are not found. The process of making analogies, for better or worse, is a human activity, put forward by Fausto in V as the poet's activity which makes living with "things" possible. Metaphor, in his apologia, shapes events, themselves without meaning, into some comprehensible order for the rest of mankind. Pynchon's masking the theoretical material in Fausto's character, and moreover in one of his "past selves," emphasizes the uncertainty of all conclusions, even the conclusion of the uncertainty of all conclusions.

Living as he does much of the time in a world of metaphor, the poet is always acutely conscious that metaphor has no value apart from its function; that it is a device, an artifice. So that while others may look on the laws of physics as legislation and God as a human form, . . . Fausto's kind are alone with the task of living in a universe of things which simply are and cloaking that innate mindlessness with comfortable and pious metaphor so that the "practical" half of humanity may continue in the Great Lie. . . .
Metaphor is seen as a significant lie, as the imposition of form onto things which in themselves do not possess a form, a position Pynchon shares with Fausto in V. Part of the point of "social thermodynamics" and entropy is that ideas are leveled throughout the culture—thus Callisto in "Entropy" has forecast in his own terms the intelligentsia of Beat NYC, the Whole Sick Crew; thus Pig Bodine picks up rudiments of existentialism, and thus Fausto's memoirs can mirror the everpresent epistemological concerns of Pynchon himself. Form is only constructed through the poetic act, metaphor; metaphors are the individual strands of sticky substance whereby webs of patterns are constructed and one of the forms which Pynchon imposes on his material is the dichotomy of the street and the hothouse, discussed in the preceding chapter. The street represents, in part, the world at large, where both molecules and people, free to come and go at "will," tend to dissipate energy according to the Second Law of Thermodynamics, while the hothouse represents the locally incrementing areas of decreasing entropy, which transferred to a human analogy tend to imprison and shut off their occupants from society and thus from new information. The street, in V., is the region Benny Profane inhabits and fears, i.e., the region of movement without purpose, "yo-yo-ing," while the hothouse is that zone of historical reconstruction Stencil carries about with him. The hothouse, according to the paradigm, makes it possible to order past events, as in a segment of Maijstral's confessions: "... the room, though windowless and cold at night, is a hothouse. Because the room is the past, though it has no history of its own. Because, as the physical being-there
of a bed or horizontal plant determines what we call love; as a high place must exist before God's word can come to a flock and any sort of religion begin; so must there be a room, sealed against the present, before we can make any attempt to deal with the past. The faults of the street are loss of perspective and maximized disorder; the faults of the hothouse are loss of immediacy and minimized new information. The two extremes, therefore, may be likened to the Heisenberg principle in quantum mechanics.

The implications of the indeterminacy principle for fiction are: that realism, as an attempt to portray faithfully some outside world, is a patent absurdity; that any correspondence between reality and fiction, evoked, as in Pynchon's novels, through closely researched detail and intermingling of factual information with invention to provide an appearance of realistic technique is therefore an absurd act; and that a fictional surface, apparently based on anything outside the confines of the self and one's own perceptions, may therefore be based on the void. In its subject matter and in its structure V. exemplifies this concept of the brilliant surface covering and displaying Nothing beneath; it is a hollow book about a hollow subject. It is interesting to compare V., in this light, to Stevens' "The Snow Man": The poem is not about nothing, but about a condition of being about nothing; in that way it investigates the limits of language in a way parallel to V. "How pleasant to watch Nothing," the lady V. says; she is Pynchon's early version of the
Unthinkable Nihilist, the woman or principle at the closest approach to the inanimate/non-human. The doctrine she espouses as the Bad Priest is summarized by Father Avalanche: "He returned, curiously like the Generation of '37, often to the rock: preaching that the object of male existence was to be like a crystal: beautiful and soulless. 'God is soulless?' speculated Father Avalanche. 'Having created souls, He Himself has none? So that to be like God we must allow to be eroded the soul in ourselves. Seek mineral symmetry, for here is eternal life: the immortality of rock. Plausible. But apostasy.' V. portrays surfaces, suggesting that beneath them lie not soul but vacuum. "'You don't even have a soul. How can you talk.'" Profane asks SHROUD, to which the reply comes (outside quotation marks) "Since when did you ever have one?" Several of the coincidences united by the initial V. and collated by Stencil suggest this relation of surface concealing hollowness beneath; the introduction to Stencil's first chapter imitates this form: "As spread thighs are to the libertine, flights of migratory birds to the ornithologist, the working part of his tool bit to the production machinist, so was the letter V to young Stencil." The various symbols here, of course, are all V-shapes, all united by a coincidence of form; and their arrangement within the sentence is a paradigm for Stencil's perception of the world. They are united not by innate similarity so much as by forced rhetoric, by imposition from without. Even in discussions of his own preoccupation Stencil is preoccupied, as in the slogan above, "Events seem to be ordered into an ominous logic."
The novel's V-symbols accumulate beyond the possibility of coincidence: from the numerous incarnations of the lady V. to the principle of V-ness (Venus) to an archetypal female principle associated with death, the sea, unconsciousness, nothingness, to incidental, initial coincidences such as Valletta, Veronica the rat in Fairing's journal entries, and Mme. Viola the necromancer whom Stencil chases off after at the book's close—the Vs proliferate wildly as Stencil seeks to fit them all into the "century's master cabal," until the pattern becomes so all-inclusive as to become meaningless, as Stencil recognizes in his more lucid moments: "'V.'s is a country of coincidence, ruled by a ministry of myth. Whose emissaries haunt this century's streets. Porcépic, Mondaugen, Stencil père, this Maijstral, Stencil fils. Could any of them create a coincidence? Only Providence creates. If the coincidences are real then Stencil has never encountered history at all, but something far more appalling." In the text of V., too, discourses abound on the significance of the V-symbols, from the simple geometric pattern set forth on the page opposite the table of contents, to diminishing strings of fluorescent lights "to the east where it's dark and there are no more bars," to related concepts of the earth-sun relationship—"If you look from the side at a planet swinging around in its orbit, split the sun with a mirror and imagine a string, it all looks like a yo-yo." And if the mirror splits the sun neither at the perpendicular nor in the plane of the ecliptic, the yo-yo motion and its reflection in the cosmic mirror extend and retract along the symmetric
limbs of a solar V. Besides the literal Vs of the novel's format and events and the figurative discourses which penetrate the more realistic events, the two strands of the plot, centering on Profane and moving around and through Stencil's impersonations, are juxtaposed, at first widely separated both in space and in time, and then gradually coming together to intersect as Profane and Stencil, accompanied by Paola, journey to Malta. The configuration of the two halves of the plot imitates the flow of the letter V from its dual top to the blank space underneath the terminal point.

Moreover, the movement along the fluorescent diminuendo to the null east is paralleled by the process towards the inanimate recurrently detailed in V. Profane determines, in his conversations with SHROUD (Synthetic Human, Radiation Output Determined—a plastic dosimeter built around the skeleton of a human being), that Things have come pretty far indeed:

"What do you mean, we'll be like you and SHOCK someday? You mean dead?"
"Am I dead? If I am then that's what I mean.
"If you aren't then what are you?"
"Nearly what you are. None of you have very far to go.
"I don't understand."
"So I see. But you're not alone. That's a comfort, isn't it?"

Human progress towards the inanimate is seen in the parabolical career of the lady V., who from the first sympathizes with "things," and through historical chronology as pieced together by the reader from Stencil's various time frames, takes into herself more and more inanimate matter—Stencil even envisions a completely synthetic V., "... skin radiant with the bloom
of some new plastic; both eyes glass but now containing photoelectric cells, connected by silver electrodes to optic nerves of purest copper wire and leading to a brain exquisitely wrought as a diode matrix could ever be."^{25}

From the first confrontation with the V. symbol, on the book's cover, with its moonscape, letter, and lady with no face, the enigmatic chapter titles and graphic V made up of Vs, to the final vortex of the epilogue, the reader is impelled by curiosity about this initial, and what it stands for. The curiosity is heightened by the diverse events of the plot, oscillating from Benny Profane and the Street, to Herbert Stencil and his historical re-creations and recreations, "impersonations," "forcible dislocation of personality," events in Alexandria during the Fashoda crisis, in Florence, South-West Africa, Malta in World War II, Paris in 1913, and finally, in the epilogue, 1919. Profane's episodes all occur in the novel's present, Stencil's all vary in chronology. Stencil's identity is inextricably bound up with the search for V. and all that that letter represents--Stencil is at one point defined as "quite purely He who looks for V."^{26} The object of his quest is in part a motive for the quest: "'His giving you any clear reason would mean he'd found her. . . . in this search the motive is part of the quarry.'"^{27} Stencil's highest level of information in the book is his realization of the dilemma between coincidence and master cabal--precisely the dilemma Oedipa Maas faces at the end of The Crying of Lot 49:
The waiting above all; if not for another set of possibilities to replace those that had conditioned the land to accept any San Narciso among its most tender flesh without a reflex or a cry, then at least, at the very least, waiting for a symmetry of choices to break down, to go skew. She had heard all about excluded middles; they were bad shit, to be avoided; and how had it ever happened here, with the chances once so good for diversity? For it was now like walking among matrices of a great digital computer, the zeroes and ones twinned above, hanging like balanced mobiles right and left, anead, thick, maybe endless. Behind the hieroglyphic streets there would either be a transcendent meaning, or only the earth. . . . Ones and zeroes. So did the couples arrange themselves. . . . Another mode of meaning behind the obvious, or none. Either Oedipa in the orbiting ecstasy of a true paranoia, or a real Tristero.

What Stencil encounters in V, and what Oedipa dawdles between in The Crying of Lot 49, is the Heisenberg problem noted above; only, being inside his perceptions instead of outside of them, as Pynchon and his readers are, he cannot analyze the problem or the way out of it. At the close of the novel, Stencil abandons Profane in Valletta to check out another hot clue, another fragment of the past which either all fits or is impossible to make fit.

Metaphor, then, is the impulse which tempts Stencil to make the book's connections—and because those connections may be deceptive, metaphor itself may be deceptive. No final determination may be made on the point. Stencil is characterized by his attempt to give history some significance, to "give [destruction] a name or face," but is unable fully to experience events himself—he "impersonates" agents of events, always in the past tense, trying to relate them to his master-plot. Profane, by contrast, experiences totally, with little context to the events. Stencil resides in the past, Profane
in the present. The only solace Profane achieves is "under the Street" in the sewers, just as Dennis Flange finds a dream kingdom of sorts in "Low-lands"—but for Profane the peace is temporary. Profane yo-yos spatially up and down the East Coast, or across New York City; Stencil, too, yo-yos, by his reconstruction in a way parallel (or perpendicular) to Profane's aimless motions. The assertion of V., then, seems to be that attempts to connect events over a range of time are as meaningless as attempts to connect events separated by space; recreating history is as futile as reversing entropy.

But V.'s plot at first reading does not organize itself around Profane and Stencil; Stencil seems no more central to his chapters than Profane seems among the Whole Sick Crew. In trying to make sense of the book's events the reader must perform an action analogous to that of Stencil, that is, must pattern events with very tenuous relation to each other into a coherent structure—he must develop a mode of interpretation. Pynchon demands throughout his fiction a greater degree of participation from his readers than most novelists; in this he resembles Joyce. To a degree V. relies on the affective response common to all works of literature; insofar as a work may be presumed to have form, the reader supposes himself obliged to perceive that form, and by the same action performs an act of construction similar to, but opposite in direction from, that of the novelist. Some familiarity is necessary for perceiving form, or pattern; the novel suggests a curious interplay between information and its application to the reader.

The interrelation between information and meaning resides in a central temperate zone: the possibilities reside between
the extremes that Stencil faces in his account of the phenomena of V.'s master plot—either coincidence beyond possibility or system of plot beyond possibility. A parallel to Stencil's dilemma—which is also Oedipa's dilemma, in another form, and which haunts Slothrop at well, as the "paranoia-antiparanoia cycle"—can be found in communication theory. Considering a string of incoming data—and words are data as surely as electronic bits—the relationship between information and meaning may fall between two extremes. In the one extreme, the bits of information are maximally different from each other, and therefore convey a maximum of information (information, that is, in the sense of communication theory); however, since these bits of information are vastly different from each other, this being the condition which produces a maximum of information, relating them into a coherent overall order is more and more difficult, the more information they convey. On the other extreme is the condition in which the information conveyed by bits diminishes rapidly, but the pattern is easily established for the overall message—in other words, there is a high degree of redundancy in the message. "The amount of uncertainty removed is . . . a function of the probability (or improbability, a layman might add) of the occurrence of this particular symbol in comparison with others which might have been chosen. If an unlikely symbol is received, it conveys more information than one which was highly probable."30 One extreme, then, is a situation in which maximum information is conveyed with each bit, but no relationship between events can be determined; the other, a condition in which events fall perfectly into a pre-established pattern, and are therefore totally redundant.
This pattern of extremes corresponds roughly to the situations of the street and the hothouse in V.; events in the street occur in the present tense, with rapidity, with relatively little interrelationship between them— as for example in the raid on the Susanna Squaducci— while events in the hothouse take on a comforting sameness. In the extreme case, however, there would be no events in the hothouse.

What one must attain in order to communicate, and what the characters of V. are denied, is the middle grounds, the space between an overload of information and sameness of information. High levels of contrasted information characterize Stencil's chapters of V., while Profane's chapters take on an almost stifling similarity, as Richard Patteson has observed: "Each of the six chapters in which V. appears as a human being is narrated in a different way, a tactic which strongly implies an attempt to explore divers literary methods of discovering and communicating knowledge." Stencil finds elements of the same Plot Which Has No Name wherever he looks; Profane finds the same dizzying Experience at every intersection and cul-de-sac of the Street. Stencil suffers from an overdose of pattern, Profane from an insufficiency of pattern. Both halves of V.'s plot comprise the dilemma of ascertaining what, precisely, is "the case"— a determination which will occupy the next chapter.
Notes to Chapter Two:


8. Emerson, p. 23.

9. Emerson, p. 22.


14. V., p. 305.


17. Pynchon, V., p. 319.

18. V., p. 267.

19. V., p. 50.


22. V., p. 2.


25. V., p. 386.


32. A similar discussion of the problem of the dilemma between formal and existence may be found in Richard Macksey, "The Artist in the Labyrinth: Design or Dasein," Modern Language Notes LXXVII:iii (May, 1962), p. 239-256.

33. Patteson, p. 31.
III: A PARODY OF SPACE: WITTGENSTEIN AND THE MESSAGE OF V.

Entropy seems to be at a high point in Pynchon's 1956; it forms the governing principle—pattern would be an inexact term—of V. The only pattern is that there is no pattern; the organizing principle of the novel is a demonstration of the various areas of disorganization. Patterns and explanations for the world, and those who make them, are badly treated in V.; thus, Herbert Stencil, "clownish Stencil capering along behind her, bells ajingle, waving a wooden, toy oxgoad. For no one's amusement but his own."¹ Henry Adams notes acidly to himself, "Ça vous amuse, la vie?" at the death of Clarence King; Adams' dry, self-accusatory humor is translated in "Mondaugen's Story" into a bitter "Stencilization" of what is the case.

A pattern of the universe, a slave-powered planetarium, provides a point of departure for this chapter of V. Kurt Mondaugen whisks Hedwig Vogelsang up and about the cinematic halls of Foppl's African villa, and finally down three or four steps to Foppl's own planetarium, a circular room with a great wooden sun, overlaid with gold leaf, burning cold in the very center and round it the nine planets and their moons, suspended from tracks in the ceiling, actuated by a coarse cobweb of chains, pulleys, belts, racks, pinions and worms, all receiving their prime impulse from a treadmill in the corner, usually operated for the amusement of the guests by a Bondelswaartz, now unoccupied. Having long fled all vestiges of music Mondaugen released her here, skipped to the treadmill and began a jog-trot that set the solar system in motion, creaking and whining in a way that raised a prickling in the teeth. Rattling, shuddering, the wooden
planets began to rotate and spin, Saturn's rings to whirl, moons their precessions, our own Earth its nutational wobble, all picking up speed; as the girl continued to dance, having chosen the planet Venus for her partner; as Mondaugen dashed along his own geodesic, following in the footsteps of a generation of slaves. When at length he tired, slowed and stopped she'd gone, vanished into the wooden reaches of what remained after all a parody of space. Mondaugen, breathing heavily, staggered off the treadmill to carry on his descent and search for the generator.

This is the Mechanistic Universe, with a vengeance. Mondaugen, himself a generator, dances to music no longer audible: this music drives the spheres of Foppl's little universe, in a humanized, out-of-scale version of the Solar System. The anthropomorphized universe is seen in Mondaugen's story both as a recurrent danger and an unavoidable premise of our cognition of the world outside ourselves. Thus the importance of Mondaugen's tale.

In the space of half an hour in a New York bar, Kurt Mondaugen recounts to Herbert Stencil events in South-West Africa, from which Stencil reconstructs the ninth chapter of V., "Mondaugen's Story." While surveying atmospheric signals, "sferics," first noticed in radio communications during World War I, Mondaugen is forced to take refuge from a native uprising in a European enclave, including Stencil's V., aged 40, Hugh Godolphin of "She Hangs on the Western Wall," and Major Weissmann, who reappears in Gravity's Rainbow with Mondaugen. Mondaugen does not fully enter into the spirit of the community in Foppl's fortress: the chief amusement there is reliving accounts of the 1904 German colonial war against the Hereros, in which 80 per cent of the natives were killed. Mondaugen has a dream or series of dreams there, featuring a recreated version of "'04."
Mondaugen leaves the villa on a plank, after Weissmann deciphers the "sferic" code; the message is translated into an acronym of Mondaugen's name, "GODEMEANTNUURK," and the German version of the first proposition of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*—"DIEWELTISTALLESWASDERFALLIST." "'The world is all that the case is,' Mondaugen said. 'I've heard that somewhere before.'" The juxtaposition of this proposition and the horrific events of the chapter suggests that the events of the world simply are, without intrinsic significance.

Such a rapid plot summary, however, fails to capture the chapter's tone, the most brutal, reified narrative section of V. "'Your people have defied the Government,' Foppl continued, 'they've rebelled, they have sinned. General von Trotha will have to come back to punish you all. He'll have to bring his soldiers with the beards and the bright eyes, and his artillery that speaks with a loud voice. How you will enjoy it, Andreas. Like Jesus returning to earth, von Trotha is coming to deliver you.'" Such combinations of sadism and pseudo-Christian mysticism are mixed with the proto-Nazi sensibilities of Weissmann: "'You're from Munich,' Weissmann established. 'Ever been around the Schwabing quarter?' On occasion. 'The Brennessel cabaret?' Never. 'Ever heard of D'Annunzio?' Then: Mussolini? Fiume? Italia irredenta? Fascisti? National Socialist German Workers' Party? Adolf Hitler? Kautsky's Independents? 'So many capital letters,' Mondaugen protested. 'From Munich, and never heard of Hitler,' said Weissmann, as if 'Hitler' were the name of an avant-garde play. 'What the hell's wrong with young people.'"

The inhabitants of Foppl's villa look fondly back to the genocide of 1904—ward ahead to that of 1944. The chapter, then, provides
a central stage in the progression of V.

Mondaugen's narrative, V's central chapter, is not only central in chapter sequence, but contains the halfway point in pagination, and moreover occurs almost halfway in the span of the historical events, between 1899 and the novel's present. The year 1922 is an interesting setting for "Mondaugen's Story": besides the Bondels' uprising, the associated events in Africa, and Weissmann's budding fuehrer in Munich, the year is a remarkable one for Western literature, seeing not only the publication of The Waste Land and Ulysses, but also Rilke's Duino Elegies and Sonnets to Orpheus--collated, like Eliot's poem, on a rest cure in Switzerland. The same year saw the death of Marcel Proust--to go on with the coincidences--the first BBC broadcast, E. E. Cummings' The Enormous Room, D. H. Lawrence's Fantasia of the Unconscious, the incorporation of The Criterion, as well as the Reader's Digest, and the appearance of the English version of the Tractatus. Eliot's and Rilke's withdrawals into sanitariums to complete their masterworks underscores the irony of Mondaugen's message.

"Mondaugen's Story" is Pynchon's fictional parable of Wittgenstein's first proposition, just as "Entropy" is a parable of the second law of thermodynamics. Just as in that story, the correspondences in Mondaugen's narrative have an arbitrary, even parodic aspect--but at the same time are to be taken seriously. A fiction for Pynchon seems to have some similarity with what Wittgenstein means by a proposition: "A proposition is a picture of reality. A proposition is a model of reality as we know it." Fictions for the characters in V are pictures
as well; but their accuracy is suspect.

Pynchon's adaptations of material from Wittgenstein tend to parody: discussions of Wittgenstein occur in the "hipster" talk of "Mortality and Mercy in Vienna," and the Tractatus is the subject of a musical number between Mafia and Charisma in V:

It is something less than heaven
To be quoted Thesis 1.7
Every time I make an advance;
If the world is all that the case is
That's a pretty discouraging basis
On which to pursue
Any sort of romance.
I've got a proposition for you;
Logical, positive and brief.
And at least it could serve as a kind of comic relief:

There are some striking correspondences as well between elements of Pynchon's world-view in V. and enigmatic terms--"object," "fact," "Proposition," "picture"--Wittgenstein uses in the Tractatus, which correspondences will be very tentatively considered here. As the concern is rather Pynchon's fiction than the Tractatus, a perhaps haphazard reading of Wittgenstein may serve our purpose.

It is common for Pynchon's characters, like flat characters throughout fiction, to show a simple, delimited view of the world; this is most clearly seen in V. in Herbert Stencil, and in members of the Whole Sick Crew such as "Fergus Mixolydian the Irish Armenian Jew and universal man." Indeed, every character necessarily develops a schema of the world, of greater or lesser complexity and fictional scope within the novel. This schema might be connected to Wittgenstein's concept of the picture, particularly in Stencil's case. "A picture is a
model of reality," Wittgenstein says, and "the sum-total of reality is the world." The picture is related to the world by means of a parallel form with the world:

2.14 What constitutes a picture is that its elements are related to one another in a determinate way. [. . . ]
2.15 The fact that the elements of a picture are related to one another in a determinate way represents that things are related to one another in the same way.

Let us call this connexion of its elements the structure of the picture, and let us call the possibility of this structure the pictorial form of the picture.

2.151 Pictorial form is the possibility that things are related to one another in the same way as the elements of the picture.
2.1511 That is how a picture is attached to reality; it reaches right out to it.

A picture is drawn from the world; and it relates the objects of the world to one another within the mind of the perceiver, the one who holds the picture. A picture, for Wittgenstein, can represent the world because of some common correspondence between their forms; similarly, propositions, the linguistic attempt to deal with things of the world, can be spoken because of some analogous similarity of form. The relationship between picture and world, or proposition and world, for Wittgenstein, is based on projection: "It reaches right out to it."

What a picture is to objects, a proposition is to words: a proposition might be said to be the equivalent in language to what a picture is to what "is the case.": "3.14 What constitutes a propositional sign is that in its elements (the words) stand in a determinate relation to one another," just as the elements of the picture are related to one another. According to Wittgenstein, language can describe the world because of a common property of form with the world. The analogy he uses is that of musical form, which relates somehow the score, the symphony, and the grooves on the record; all of these are
vastly different, but there is some common relation between them.

4.014 A gramophone record, the musical idea, the written notes, and the sound-waves, all stand to one another in the same internal relation of depicting that holds between language and the world. They are all constructed according to a common logical plan. (Like the two youths in the fairy-tale, their two horses, and their lilies. They are all in a certain sense one.)

4.0141 There is a general rule by means of which the musician can obtain the symphony from the score, and which makes it possible to derive the symphony from the groove on the gramophone record, and, using the first rule, to derive the score again. That is what constitutes the inner similarity between these things which seem to be constructed in such entirely different ways. And that rule is the law of projection which projects the symphony into the language of musical notation. It is the rule for translating this language into the language of musical notation. [. . . .]

4.015 The possibility of all imagery, of all our pictorial modes of expression, is contained in the logic of depiction.\\^{15}

One often suspects Pynchon of introducing into the novels motifs from everywhere; thus Wittgenstein's parenthetical comment reminds us of Mondaugen's "Firelily" dream, which is a distillation of sadistic colonial discussions he has been hearing at Foppl's villa--"the dreams of a voyeur can never be his own." The relationship described above, however, between different media of music, transformed into a fictional equivalent, might be similar to the narrative passage on the cross-town bus in _V._:

The bus driver was of the normal or placid cross-town type; having fewer traffic lights and stops to cope with than the up-and-downtown drivers, he could afford to be genial. A portable radio hung by his steering wheel, tuned to WQXR. Tchaikovsky's Romeo and Juliet Overture flowed syrupy around him and his passengers. As the bus crossed Columbus Avenue, a faceless delinquent heaved a rock at it. Cries in Spanish ascended to it out of the darkness. A report which could have been either a
backfire or a gunshot sounded a few blocks downtown. Captured in the score's black symbols, given life by vibrating air columns and strings, having taken passage through transducers, coils, capacitors and tubes to a shuddering paper cone, the eternal drama of love and death continued to unfold entirely disconnected from this evening and place. 

There is however a clear distinction between Wittgenstein's notion of common form and Pynchon's evident viewpoint in V.: for Pynchon it is not that the things of the world must have order because they can be imitated conceptually in "pictures," or related verbally in propositions, but rather that language, and human cognition, impose form upon the things of the world. Man in this view is estranged from the world.

Mondaugen is himself estranged not only from the world but from the people inside Foppl's fortress. He is a voyeur, we repeatedly are told:

"Back here Mondaugen could also see down into a kind of inner courtyard. [. . . ] The reflected sunlight vanished up a wall and into the sky. He looked up, saw the window opposite complete its swing open and a woman of indeterminate age in a negligée of peacock blues and greens squint into the sun. Her left hand rose to her left eye, fumbled there as if positioning a monocle. Mondaugen crouched behind curlicues of wrought iron, astonished not so much at anything in her appearance at at his own latent desire to see and not to be seen. He waited for the sun or her chance movement to show him nipples, navel, pubic hair.

But she had seen him. "Come out, come out, gargoyle," she called playfully."

The object of Mondaugen's vicarious pursuit is Stencil's lady V. Voyeurs are observers, not strictly participants, in the world; like historians, they do not interact with the world proper, and consequently Mondaugen the voyeur occupies for the chapter approximately the position of the historian in Pynchon's hothouse scheme.
The dream which invades Mondaugen's sleep is a dream not his own, but derived somehow from the memories of "'04" recounted by Foppl: "But his own musical commentary on dreams had not included the obvious and perhaps for him indispensable: that if dreams are only waking sensation first stored and later operated on, then the dreams of a voyeur can never be his own..." The dream mode of experience enables Mondaugen to participate in the Herero exterminations, and in the feeling of release described by Foppl earlier: "'I loved the man,' he said. 'He taught us not to fear. It's impossible to describe the sudden release; the comfort, the luxury; when you knew you could safely forget all the rote-lessons you'd had to learn about the value and dignity of human life... till we've done it, we're taught that it's evil. Having done it, then's the struggle: to admit to yourself that it's not really evil at all. That like forbidden sex, it's enjoyable.'" One significance of the chapter is that things of the world are themselves without ethical significance: at the same time that Pynchon can evoke our gut revulsion at genocide and the reification of human beings, the recurrent theme of V., he can promote the philosophical assertion of the message Mondaugen receives, that "the world is all that is the case." There is present in the world of V. no God and no source of ethical condemnation for either the Herero wars or for the Nazi campaign against the Jews—"This is only 1 per cent of 6 million, but still pretty good," the narrator tells us. Wittgenstein, too, denies the ethical significance of the world's events, but the effect is vastly different when done in the form of a novel:
6.41 The sense of the world must lie outside the world. In the world everything is as it is, and everything happens as it does happen: in it no value exists—and if it did, it would have no value.

If there is any value that does have value, it must lie outside the whole sphere of what happens and is the case. For all that happens and is the case is accidental.

What makes it non-accidental cannot lie within the world, since if it did it would itself be accidental. It must lie outside the world.

6.42 And so it is impossible for there to be propositions of ethics. Propositions can express nothing of what is higher.

Such a denial of ethical meaning within the world would seem to be the philosophical justification both of mass murder and of the novel's process of reification. Pynchon gives us in "Mondaugen's Story" the extreme case of Wittgenstein's conclusion: the reader oscillates between the impulse to condemn the proto-Nazi sensibilities of Foppl, Weissmann, and V., and the even more frightening possibility that there is no significance to the events, that they indeed are as random as the atmospheric chirps and squawks Mondaugen's oscillograph records. This suggests one of the touchstone passages in *Gravity's Rainbow*: "If there is something comforting—religious, if you want—about paranoia, there is still also anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long. Well right now Slothrop feels himself sliding onto the anti-paranoid part of his cycle, feels the whole city around him going back roofless, vulnerable, uncentered as he is, and only pasteboard images now of the Listening Enemy left between him and the wet sky. Either They have put him here for a reason, or he's just here. He isn't sure that he wouldn't, actually, have that reason..."
its opposite haunts Pynchon's protagonists, from Herbert Stencil, through Oedipa Maas, to Tyrone Slothrop; and it is this oscillation between the states that occupies Pynchon's imagination.

Such oscillation is possible because of the overlay of two contrasting "pictures" of the world, and because of the impossibility of proving either one's accuracy. A picture, as I understand Wittgenstein's term, is a conceptual model of the world; that picture translated into language is known as a proposition. Wittgenstein explains the relationship by saying "a logical picture of facts is a thought," and "in a proposition a thought finds an expression that can be perceived by the senses." These three levels, conceptual, linguistic, and actual, correspond because of common properties of form, just as a musical score, a symphonic performance, and modulations in plastic may possess a common form from the musical idea. The relationship between these levels occurs, also, in a way analogous to how the symphonic performance is produced from the score, in what Wittgenstein calls "projection": "3.11 We use the perceptible sign of a proposition (spoken or written, etc.) as a projection of a possible situation. The method of projection is to think out the sense of the proposition. 3.12 I call the sign with which we express a thought a propositional sign.--And a proposition is a propositional sign in its projective relation to the world." Pynchon's fiction, insofar as it has such a "projective relation" to the world, is an example of realism; Pynchon's realistic (using the term
as the adjectival form of realism) impulse in the fiction relates the events of the world to the events of the fiction, and vice versa—the two share common form, just as a proposition shares some form with "what is the case." Propositions and pictures can describe the world wrongly or rightly, but in their very form they attempt such a description.

The novel for Pynchon—at least to this point—is not one in which alternative worlds constructed of words are set up to compete in some fashion with the real world, or even to deny its existence; the fiction always relates back in some way to the world and to our perceptions of the world. The relation to the world may perhaps be related to Frank Kermode's "fictive models of the temporal world." The requirements of realism for Pynchon, however, are considerably changed from the earlier American neo-realistic school of Hemingway and Fitzgerald, and the analysis of Pynchon's use of realistic modes of fiction, beyond merely noting the representational aspect of his fiction, is beyond the scope of this thesis. Fiction in some sense is representative of the world, a fact borne out by Pynchon's use of historical detail within V. Examples of factual detail are numerous enough so that a haphazard list should suffice: existentialism and the Whole Sick Crew; Esther's crosstown reading matter, The Search for Bridey Murphy; Profane's East Main; Davy Crockett; the Suez crisis; and so on. The novel is thoroughly researched, presenting day-to-day particulate details of New York in the fifties. In one passage in particular, Pynchon refuses even to cloak his research within the illusion of the fiction itself: "Twenty days before the Dog Star moved into conjunction with the sun, the dog days began. The world
started to run more and more afoul of the inanimate. Fifteen were killed in a train wreck near Oaxaca, Mexico, on 1 July. The next day fifteen people died when an apartment house collapsed in Madrid. [. . .]"27 The catalog continues for a page at least, citing greater and lesser figures, more means of multiple deaths. "These were the mass deaths. There were also the attendant maimed, malfunctioning, homeless, lorn. It happens every month in a succession of encounters between groups of living and a congruent world which simply doesn't care. Look in any yearly Almanac, under "Disasters"--which is where the figures above come from. The business is transacted month after month after month."28 What could be more realistic than a mere listing of figures?--and yet the presence of the list within the context of the fiction colors its significance. The "real world" enters the fiction and yet is shaped by the fiction.

Effects of fiction upon the world outside, too, are seen inside V., though not as clearly as the converse. Full discussion of this will recur in the context of Gravity's Rainbow. In V. the Whole Sick Crew takes its reading matter from Time;29 the Davy Crockett craze has its opposite pole in the medium of the television, itself a fiction, and its effects on human behavior: "Millions of kids everywhere you looked were running around with these bushy Freudian hermaphrodite symbols on their heads. Nonsensical legends were being propagated about Crockett, all in direct contradiction to what Winsome had heard as a boy, across the mountains from Tennessee. This man, a foul-mouthed louse-ridden boozehound, a corrupt legislator and an indifferent pioneer, was being set up for the nation's youth as a towering and cleanlimbed example of Anglo-Saxon superiority."30 stencil
too, illustrates the point: Maijstral tells him, according to his own expectations, what he wants to hear. "Stencil's eyes narrowed. Maijstral turned, caught him looking cagy. 'Yes, yes. Thirteen of us rule the world in secret.'" Acting on one's fictions, or showing their effects in behavior, might be equated to "projection," in Wittgenstein's sense.

Fictions, then, may well be divergent from "what is the case." In order to evaluate the accuracy of any picture, one would have to place himself outside its logical space—"But Stencil himself, who seemed more unaware each day (under questioning) of what was happening in the rest of the world, reinforced Maijstral's growing theory that V. was an obsession after all, and that such an obsession is a hothouse: constant temperature, windless, too crowded with particolored sports, unnatural blooms."—an impossibility. Wittgenstein states of pictures, and it holds as well for propositions, the linguistic equivalent of pictures, that "in order to tell whether a picture is true or false we must compare it with reality," and "it is impossible to tell from the picture alone whether it is true or false." Solipsism is the converse of realism; words do not refer back to an external, "real world" of concrete things, but have their existence solely in the mind. Solipsism is not a problem for Wittgenstein because there is no possibility of realism for the self: the self can no more encompass "things as they are" outside its own picture of the world than the eye can see itself. "5.64 Here it can be seen that solipsism, when its implications are followed out strictly, coincides with pure realism. The self of solipsism shrinks to a point without extension, and there remains the reality co-ordinated with it."
But for a novelist in the omniscient mode, with several distinct characters, solipsism cannot be operative: the various pictures of the characters conflict with one another, and from this conflict a composite picture, a collage if you will, is built up. How one constructs a picture of the world—a process comparable to the poet's activity of metaphor, as considered in the preceding chapter—is subject to truth or falsity, but not by oneself. Only in comparison is the verity of the picture possible. Notes Wittgenstein: "The limits of my language mean the limits of my world."35 The mind cannot escape its own confines to evaluate the limits, just as language cannot determine its own form, and just as the eye cannot see itself. When Oedipa Maas deliberates near the end of The Crying of Lot 49 on the existence of the Tristero system, her dilemma is precisely that which Wittgenstein evokes here: is the world as she perceives it separately existent from her perceptions? She cannot evaluate its accuracy, since one cannot escape his own picture of the world. Thus all fictions become equally sensible, or equally nonsensical: "All propositions are of equal value."36 Solipsism for the individual, according to Wittgenstein, is indistinguishable from realism, but not for the author, who must compare them with what is the case.

The form of V., as well as its philosophical underpinnings and part of its substance, is analogous in several important ways to the Tractatus: the novel, like the treatise, is diverse in form, occurring not in a unified statement but in a multiplicity of form which requires a greater role from the reader
to recreate within his own "picture" its form. Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* is less a coherent philosophical statement than a set of epigrammatic propositions; like Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," its intent is "to lead you to an overwhelming question ..." Warren Shibles comments on Wittgenstein's attitude towards his own writings: "He did not think a philosophical theory could be presented by only particular instances and examples. The many aspects of language, he thought, cannot be organized into a single theory, a single thread running through all instances." What language must do is to bring the reader to the point of recognizing what it cannot say—to show forth rather than to tell. "My propositions serve as elucidations in the following way: anyone who understands me eventually recognizes them as nonsensical, when he has used them—as steps—to climb up beyond them. (He must, so to speak, throw away the ladder after he has climbed up it.) He must transcend these propositions, and then he will see the world aright." In the role it demands from the reader the *Tractatus* is like V, requiring a more active role to bring the parts into some relationship—support for this assertion comes from James C. Morrison, who says "what makes up a given idea or thought, the structure or relationship of the parts of the argument to one another and to the whole, are not always apparent. Much is latent and implicit, and it becomes the task of the reader to enter into the idea and bring it fully to light within his understanding." The *Tractatus*, then, is a set of diverse propositions, numbered 1, 1.1, 1.2, 1.2., etc. to 7, according to a hierarchy of argument, which propositions act on the reader (and are
assembled by him into relations with each other) by juxtaposition, comparison, and contrast. V.'s diverse parts seem to relate to each other in an analogous fashion. Pynchon does not comment at length in the chapter on the similarities between von Trotha's expedition against the Hereros in 1904, or the Nazi executions of Jews 40 years later, because he doesn't have to--the reader brings the knowledge of these events and their proper interpretation to bear on the facts Pynchon has provided. The form of the Tractatus, moreover, imitates and supports the conclusion to be drawn from it, in one important way: objects in the world, for Wittgenstein, simply exist; they are grouped, by means of naming, then by association in propositions, into a system through the action of language. These propositions, however, cannot themselves discuss their structure; they can only show forth their structure. Similarly, "Mondaugen's Story" does not moralize on the significance of its events, but leads the reader to draw the conclusions. There are for Wittgenstein things in the world beyond the reach of language to describe. "The logical form of language itself cannot be expressed by language," since it would have to be expressed through language.

Finally, Wittgenstein's Tractatus can be said to have its counterpart in fiction in V. because it is a "hollow" philosophical work, a work which uses the means of philosophy to undercut and deny the possibility of philosophy, just as V. uses the means of metaphor to attack the validity of metaphor: "We have in Wittgenstein the explicit assertion that philosophy is to be rejected, and the implicit method which is
definitely philosophical. By speaking of philosophy as a philosophical joke he suggests that when language is used out of its ordinary language-game or universe of discourse it becomes strange, it becomes a joke if taken literally. The *Tractatus* is philosophy attempting to investigate its own limits, according to its own definition an absurd undertaking; other concepts beyond the reach of language for Wittgenstein include: "the 'solution of the riddle of life' (6.4312), the sense of the world, value," and "God (6.432)." This sense of the unreachable for and through language is the basis at once of Wittgenstein's mysticism and nihilism. As James C. Morrison concludes, "The final outcome of the *Tractatus* is nihilism. [. . . ] a nihilism which negates the very possibility of philosophy itself. And it is this very negation that is the real meaning of the last pronouncement of the work, which, although it is last, is also its major thought. "What we cannot speak about we must consign to silence."

The mystical, "what we cannot speak about," is linked in *V.* to the emptying of the self and with reification, the progress towards the inanimate. In "She hangs on the Western Wall," Hugh Godolphin has a mystical vision: "The colors. So many colors. [. . . ] The trees outside the head shaman's house have spider monkeys which are iridescent. They change color in the sunlight. Everything changes. The mountains, the lowlands are never the same color from one hour to the next. No sequence of colors is the same from day to day. As if you lived inside a madman's kaleidoscope. Even your dreams become flooded with
colors, with shapes no Occidental ever saw. Not real shapes, not meaningful ones. Simply random, the way clouds change over a Yorkshire landscape." Godolphin undertook a trip to the South Pole, in winter, to try to deal with the riddle of Vheissu: "They thought I was insane. Possibly I was, by that time. But I had to reach it. I had begun to think that there, at one of the only two motionless places on this gyrating world, I might have peace to solve Vheissu's riddle." Another "still point of the turning world," literally, at the pole. What Godolphin finds there, however, is not peace, but "a dream of annihilation":

"It was not until the Southern Expedition last year that I saw what was beneath her skin." "What did you see?" asked Signor Mantissa, leaning forward. "Nothing," Godolphin whispered. "It was Nothing I saw." Godolphin is at Foppl's in 1922, in "Mondaugen's Story," because he wishes to make another, futile try at the Pole, at Pynchon's "Heart of Darkness" in V. Peace is found, too, in Mondaugen's "Firelily" dream from murder--from "the destroyer and the destroyed, and the act which united them." The two of them got the key from the sergeant, unlocked and removed their Hottentot from the trek, and brought him off to the side. After Fleische, with the tip of his sjambok, had had the obligatory sport with the black's genitals, they clubbed him to death with the butts of their rifles and tossed what was left behind a rock for the vultures and flies.

But as they did this thing--and Fleische said later that he'd felt something like it too--there came over him for the first time an odd sort of peace, perhaps like what the black was feeling as he gave up the ghost. Usually the most you felt was annoyance; the kind of annoyance you have for an insect that's buzzed around you for too long. [. . . ]

This time it wasn't like that. Things seemed all at once to fall into a pattern: a great cosmic fluttering
in the blank, bright sky and each grain of sand, each cactus spine, each feather of the circling vulture above them and invisible molecule of heated air seemed to shift imperceptibly so that this black and he, and he and every other black he would henceforth have to kill slid into alignment, assumed a set symmetry, a dancelike poise.

Esther experiences a mystical experience, too, during her nose job, also aligned with the loss of self: "'Now,' gently, like a lover, 'I'm going to saw off your hump.' Esther watched his eyes as best she could, looking for something human there. Never had she felt so helpless. Later she would say, 'It was almost a mystic experience. What religion is it--one of the Eastern ones--where the highest condition we can attain is that of an object--a rock. It was like that; I felt myself drifting down, this delicious loss of Estherhood, becoming more and more a blob, with no worries, traumas, nothing: only Being. . . ."

The movement towards loss of self, towards death, towards the inanimate in V. is aligned with the second law of thermodynamics and is linear; these sorts of equations are considerably more complicated in Gravity's Rainbow, as will be seen later. Such a state of rockhood as Esther recounts here is preached by V. as the "Bad Priest" on Malta: "The girls he advised to become nuns, avoid the sensual extremes--pleasure of intercourse, pain of childbirth. The boys he told to find strength in--and be like--the rock of their island. He returned, curiously like the Generation of '37, often to the rock: preaching that the object of male existence was to be like a crystal: beautiful and soulless."

The mystical for Wittgenstein is that which cannot be expressed in language--"What we cannot speak about we must consign to silence."--and at least one thing we cannot speak
about, for Pynchon, is Nothing, the void at the center of Vheissu. Coming to apprehend the mystical, for Pynchon, is like attaining the vision of Wallace Stevens' "Snow Man":

One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow; [. . . ]

and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow,
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is. 52

a vision which may be approached only indirectly, by elucidating the surfaces over that void, and emphasizing their nature as surface.

Content and form may be said to bear the same relationship as surface and structure; V. is a novel of surfaces which conceal the "dream of annihilation" beneath. The novel is a masterful inversion of the Argument from Design: the fact that things show themselves to be without order implies that there must be no One to impose order. The novel, like Vheissu, or like the message of Mondaugen's code, is all surface and no Meaning, and therefore imitates its meaning, in thorough unity of content and form. Mondaugen's message from the stars was Wittgenstein's first proposition, "The world is all that is the case"; similarly appropriate to the book is Wittgenstein's last proposition, a statement about the inadequacy of language to investigate those things which reside below its own surface, within its own logical structure, or the significance of those
things. "That which we cannot speak must be consigned to silence," and V. is Pynchon's attempt to enunciate the silence at the heart of existence.
Notes to Chapter Three:

1. Thomas Pynchon, V, p. 50.
2. V, p. 22.
5. V, p. 224.
10. Wittgenstein, 2.12; p. 15.
11. ibid., 2.063; p. 15.
12. ibid., p. 15.
13. ibid., p. 21.
14. ibid., 2.14; p. 15.
15. ibid., p. 39.
24. ibid., 3.1; p. 19.
25. ibid., p. 21.
27. Pynchon, V, p. 270.
29. V, p. 46.
30. V, p. 203.
33. Wittgenstein, 2.223 and 2.224; p. 19.
34. ibid., p. 117.
35. ibid., 5.6; p. 115. Italics his.
36. ibid., 6.4; p. 145.
39. Wittgenstein, 6.54; p. 151.
41. ibid., p. 67.
42. Shibles, p. 5.
43. Morrison, p. 67.
44. ibid., p. 143.
45. Pynchon, V., p. 155.
46. V., p. 189.
47. V., p. 188.
48. V., p. 245.
49. V., p. 244-45.
50. V., p. 93.
51. V., p. 319.
IV: KUTE KORRESPONDENCES: THE CONCEPT OF THE INTERFACE IN GRAVITY'S RAINBOW

Metaphor in V. appears as a process of imposing form upon phenomena which in themselves do not possess form; or what may come to be the same thing, the forms things themselves have are necessarily obscured by the form the perceiver places them in by the act of perception. Metaphor, then, may be seen as a way of arranging events through language, or making connections or ordering the world into a coherent system whereby some "sense" can be made. By suggesting in V. that metaphor is a contribution towards the Great Lie, however, Pynchon may be seen to be weakening the basis of his own fiction: the novelist ultimately is the one who arranges events into whatever final order they assume in the book, and for the novelist to assert in a highly organized work that metaphor, his fundamental tool, is to be distrusted is equivalent to esthetic suicide.

But by the time of writing Gravity's Rainbow, Pynchon seems to place more trust in the fundamental act of metaphor; less is made of the profound distrust of the senses, and fiction becomes not only parabolic but parabolical. The novel itself follows the physical form which is often its own concern, and that form is itself taken seriously, in contrast to V. This distinction in the uses of metaphor in V. and Gravity's Rainbow may be illustrated by considering the V-symbols and their nearest equivalent in Gravity's Rainbow, the interface symbols. The V-symbols begin to accumulate in association with Stencil in Chapter Three: "As spread thighs are to the libertine, flights of
migratory birds to the ornithologist, the working part of his tool bit to the production machinist, so was the letter V to young Stencil."¹ By this time there has already been a description of the string of fluorescent lights "receding in an asymmetric V to the east where it's dark and there are no more bars."² Throughout V., Pynchon dangles before the reader a number of possible referents to that letter, covering so much data that one must either conclude that everything is stitched into the fabric of coincidences or call into question the whole process of drawing connections. Even in the introduction to Stencil's "eight impersonations" quoted above, all of the symbols cited form the V shape whose incarnation Stencil is pursuing. He himself is unsure of the reasons for his quest: "'Why?' said Profane. 'Why not?' said Stencil. 'His giving you any clear reason would mean he'd already found her.[. . .] in this search the motive is part of the quarry.'³ By the novel's end Stencil is no further along in his quest than at its beginning; he abandons Profane in Malta to seek information about one Mme. Viola, a necromancer, and the symbols of Stencil's quest remain in their state of either/or--either unbounded multiplicity or alignment by initial into "the century's master cabal."⁴

The interface symbols in Gravity's Rainbow, however, are united not by coincidence of initial, but by a physical shape or phenomenon, and then by metaphorical development of the phenomenon. The interface is first mentioned in Gravity's Rainbow in connection with the brain of a dog undergoing Pavlovian conditioning: the fact that an animal becomes conditioned to an external stimulus implies that he has learned
a basic metaphor—bell means food. Thus metaphors no longer imply the threat of solipsism, since there can be external verification of the process of metaphor in at least one case. The emphasis in *Gravity's Rainbow* shifts from the problem of solipsism to that of paranoia—from perception to freedom.

In *Gravity's Rainbow* the problem of "control" is metaphorically established by the image of the parabola, to which the title refers. The parabola is the shape projectiles assume in flight, under the influence of gravity; and the characters of *Gravity's Rainbow* move both under the threat of the rocket and under control of some kind.

Back in a room, early in Slothrop's life, a room forbidden to him now, is something very bad. Something was done to him, and it may be that Katje knows what. Hasn't he, in her "futureless look," found some link to his own past, something that connects them closely as lovers? He sees her standing at the end of a passage in her life, without any next step to take—all her bets are in, she has only the tedium now of being knocked from one room to the next, a sequence of numbered rooms whose numbers do not matter, till inertia brings her to the last. That's all.

Naïve Slothrop never thought anybody's life could end like that. Nothing so bleak. But by now it's grown much less strange to him—he's been snuggling up, masturbatorily scared-elated, to the disagreeable chance that exactly such Control might already have been put over him.

The Forbidden Wing. Oh, the hand of a terrible croupier is that touch on the sleeves of his dreams: all in his life of what has looked free or random, is discovered to've been under some Control, all the time, the same as a fixed roulette wheel—where only destinations are important, attention is to long-term statistics, not individuals: and where the House always does, of course, keep turning a profit. . . .

"You were in London," she will presently whisper, turning back to her wheel and spinning it again, face averted, womanly twisting the night-streaked yarn of her past, "while they were coming down. I was in 's Gravenhage"—fricatives sighing, the name spoken with exile's lingering—"while they were going up. Between you and me is not only a rocket trajectory, but also a life. You will come to understand that between the two points, in the
five minutes, it lives an entire life. You haven't even learned the data on our side of the flight profile, the visible or trackable. Beyond them there's so much more, so much none of us know. . . ."

But it is a curve each of them feels, unmistakably. It is the parabola. They must have guessed, once or twice—guessed and refused to believe—that everything, always, collectively, had been moving toward that purified shape latent in the sky, that shape of no surprise, no second chances, no return. Yet they do move forever under it, reserved for its own black-and-white bad news certainly as if it were the Rainbow, and they its children. . . .

The anxiety of being under control, under the rocket's arc, pervades the novel; similarly, the novel itself may be considered as a parabola, since almost its first event is a rocket rising from the east, and since its conclusion is a rocket descending in the west, on "you," i.e. us, the readers. A primary means in which Pynchon turns his address up to the reader, and thereby brings him into the scope of the novel's controlling metaphor, under the parabola, is his use of the "interface" metaphor.

"Interface" is a term which has entered American usage, except for its original scientific-technological context, largely since 1963—the date of V.'s publication. Its original referent was the "plane or other surface forming a common boundary of two bodies or spaces; the boundary between two planes in a heterogeneous physical-chemical system." With the increasing use of computers, the term came to be used in reference to the areas of intersection between the central processing unit and input-output mechanisms such as the printer, keyboard, disk or tape drive, or card reader. A later stage finds the term in common use, referring to "anything that mediates
between disparate items: machinery, people, thought, so that one may speak of the "interface between the scientist and society." Thus the term arises in scientific usage, then is extended to society at large, in a manner precisely parallel to Pynchon's "social thermodynamics."

The first use of the world "interface" in Gravity's Rainbow occurs in a discussion of operant conditioning (79), although a related concept appears without the word itself earlier, in a discussion of "ideas of the opposite" (48); later the cortex is suggested as the connection between the organism and the environment: "Now that he has moved into 'equivalent' phase, the first of the transmarginal phases, a membrane, hardly noticeable, stretches between Dog Vanya and the outside. Inside and outside remain just as they were, but the interface—the cortex of Dog Vanya's brain—is changing, in any number of ways..." (78-79) The interface, then, is inherently involved in the concept of making connections between inside and outside, and consequently is an integral part of the process of metaphor for Pynchon. The psychological usage of the term is generalized by Spectro, one of the novel's Pavlovians, from dog to humans as well: "He saw the cortex as interface organ, mediating between [the Outside and Inside], but part of them both" (141-42). The answer to the dilemma Slothrop poses for Pointsman and his whole cosmology of cause and effect, as well as Pointsman's path to Stockholm and the Nobel Prize, lies at another, specific interface: "Sign and symptoms. Was Spectro right? Could Outside and Inside be part of the same field? If only in fairness... in fairness... Pointsman ought
to be seeking the answer at the interface . . . oughtn't he
. . . on the cortex of Lieutenant Slothrop"(144). Thus the
concept of the interface first enters Gravity's Rainbow in a
psychological context, as the intersection between the indivi-
dual and the world. Concurrent with this development in the
term, however, Pynchon involves it in other descriptions and
in metaphorical extensions to other contexts.

The first section of Gravity's Rainbow, "Beyond the Zero,"
refers not only to the point on the number line dividing
positive from negative, but also to extinction of conditioned
reflexes past the zero point(84-85); zero is used as the dividing
point between opposite states, such as awake and asleep (119),
normal and paradoxical (136), or living and dead (1). Zero,
then, becomes representative of the interface concept. Points-
man and Mexico, the "Antipointsman," are described as "'Ideas
of the opposite' themselves, but on what cortex, what winter
hemisphere?" (89). The suggestion is that the two are exactly
equal but opposite; later this mathematical metaphor is liter-
alized when Mexico threatens to reduce Pointsman's efforts to
control Slothrop to nothing: "'Do you understand? If it means
giving my life,' the words have just come out, and maybe Roger's
exaggerating, but maybe not, 'there will be nothing anywhere
for you. What you get, I'll take. If you go higher in this,
I'll come and get you, and take you back down. Wherever you go.
. . . You will never cancel me. If you come out, I'll go in,
and the room will be defiled for you, haunted, and you'll have
to find another'" (636-37).

Pynchon does not take long to suggest other interfaces:
one of the White Visitation psychologists considers the bureau's
perpetuation after the cessation of hostilities: "The only issue now is survival—on through the awful interface of V-E Day, on into the bright new Postwar with senses and memories intact" (80). Along with the cortical and other sorts of interfaces developed in *Gravity's Rainbow*, the interface of body literally connecting with body is established. Pynchon describes Roger and Jessica, "Together they are a long skin interface" (120). Sexual union is a metaphor thus literalized: union is manifested, literally, by having selves come together, through sexual liaison. This is extended almost to self-parody in the group copulation on board the *Anubis* (466-67). The term is used in connection with the White Visitation subplot for some time; it becomes important, first, for Pointsman's extension of control over Slothrop, and second for the psychics associated with the bureau, who regularly deal with the "other side."

Thus the ideas of death as interface; zero as mathematical image for the boundary between positive and negative, between two orders of being; and the psychics themselves who act as "output mechanisms" for those in another order—-all these become involved in a complex of significances for the interface term. Carroll Eventyr, at the age of thirty-five, begins to "fade out" and be possessed by voices, sometimes speaking in German, a language he doesn't understand; insofar as he enables the voices to communicate with others of the White Visitation, then, he is spoken of as "an interface between the worlds, a sensitive" (146). The line between life and death, though not itself called an interface here, is nonetheless associated with the concept; death is a "zero," a "point of discontinuity,"
or a transition between the two orders of reality: "Those souls across the interface, those we call the dead, are increasingly anxious and evasive" (147). That which is on the other side of the interface, "another order of being," is equated to skin, in a system of metaphor similar to the brightly colored surfaces of Vheissu in V.9 The young man, Carroll Eventyr, is being given a job description:

We all go up to the Outer Level, young man. Some immediately, others not for a while. But sooner or later everyone out here has to go Epidermal. No exceptions.
--Has to--
--I'm sorry.
--But isn't it ... I thought it was only a--well, a level. A place you'd visit. Isn't it ... ?
--Outlandish scenery, oh yes so did I--unusual formations, a peep into the Outer Radiance. But it's all of us, you see. Millions of us, changed to interface, to horn, and no feeling, and silence. (148)

Mediums interact with the dead, it is implied, only at the risk of losing touch (as Lyle Bland is later to do [590]) with "home base," the CNS, the bureaucratic habit of designating things by initials substituting those letters for the central nervous system. Nora Dodson-Truck finds in the Outer Radiance "only the millions of last moments ... no more. Our history is an aggregate of last moments" (149).

Present in the discussion between Nora Dodson-Truck and Carroll Eventyr is the metaphor of skin-as-interface associated previously with Roger Mexico and Jessica; another interface in Gravity's Rainbow closely allied with the skin is the plastic Imipolex G, which is both placed over the skin in Gottfried's niche in the A4 and used somehow in Tyrone Slothrop's
infant conditioning. Greta Erdmann describes the ultimate plastic orgasm, using Imipolex G: "They took away my clothes and dressed me in an exotic costume of some black polymer, very tight at the waist, open at the crotch. It felt alive on me. "Forget leather, forget satin," shivered Drohne. "This is Imipolex, the material of the future." I can't describe its perfume, or how it felt—the luxury. [. . .] Nothing I ever wore, before or since, aroused me quite as much as Imipolex!" (488). This testimonial is supplemented further, in the last book, by a pseudo-academic, technical perspective:

SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF IMIPOLEX G

Imipolex G is the first plastic that is actually erectile. Under suitable stimuli, the chains grow cross-links, which stiffen the molecule and increase inter-molecular attraction so that this Peculiar Polymer runs far outside the known phase diagrams [. . .] a beam-scanning system—or several—analogous to the well-known video electron stream, modulated with grids and deflection plates located as needed on the Surface (or even below the outer layer of Imipolex, down at the interface with What lies just beneath: with What has been inserted or What has actually grown itself a skin of Imipolex G, depending on which heresy you embrace. [. . .]) (699-700)

This is the technological description of Plasticman from the outside, the cosmology of SHROUD: there is no secure "scientific" basis for saying whether there is a "real" man beneath the second, plastic skin or not. This is the ultimate technological perversion, the second skin, the reabsorption into the plastic womb, the interface between animate man and inanimate mother. Pynchon's emphasis on the distinctions between animate and inanimate in V. and in the Rathenau seance in Gravity's Rainbow (166-67), suggest that a similar point of view may hold here. Gottfried's entry into the rocket recapitulates the womb symbol
in inanimate guise: "The glove is the cavity into which the Hand fits, as the 00000 is the womb into which Gottfried returns. Stuff him in. Not a Procrustean bed, but modified to take him. The two, boy and Rocket, concurrently designed. Its steel hindquarters bent so beautifully . . . he fits well. They are mated to each other, Schwarzgerät and next higher assembly" (750-51). The plastic Imipolex G forms a second skin for Gottfried; similarly, "Richard M. Zhlubb" has a fantasy of being enclosed in plastic on the Santa Monica freeway and being suffocated. Pynchon's use of the skin-surface as interface, however, partially contrasts its metaphoric significance in V.; in Hugh Godolphin's vision, the flashing colors of Vheissu conceal the void at the center. Skin therefore in V. is not a passage through, but a concealment, a diversion; but in Gravity's Rainbow it serves rather as interface, as connection between two orders, inside and outside, just as the cortex does.

Other uses of the term interface are perhaps less important—for example, natural phenomena. "Dawn's slender interface" (331) creates the "God-shadows" Geli and Slothrop entertain themselves with. A discussion of brand names of cameras refers to the "violet-bleeding interfaces" (484); and the "175s" have an interface between "the visible Lager and the invisible SS" (666). A literal interface which Pynchon gives some metaphorical importance is the plane between the Leunagasolin and water in the rocket fuel tanks:

When the Ombindi people took Maria off to find their doctor in Hamburg, voices began calling—voices of the Fungus Pygmies who breed in the tanks at the interface between fuel and water-bottom began to call to [Christian]. "Pavel! Omunene! Why don't you come back, to see us?"
We miss you. Why have you stayed away?" Not much fun for them down here at the Interface, competing with the bacteria who cruise by in their country of light, these celllar aristocracy, approaching the wall of hydrocarbons each for his share of God's abundance—leaving their wastes, a green murmur, a divergently unstable gabbling, a slime that grows with the days thicker, more poisonous.

(523)

Here the interface is hallucinated into the Interface, the division between "the whole bacteria-hydrocarbon-waste cycle" (523) and the "poisonous" forces, which curiously are not at all malevolent; they take on a Wonderland aspect, more like munchkins than the usual fungi.

Cities, in another literal use of the term, are described as being on the interfaces of time zones (696); and Thanatz and Ludwig, "having perimeters they are not supposed to cross" (736-37), nevertheless "have crept away anyhow, to a piece of the interface" between these perimeters. Pynchon's definition of the term (668) suggests that knowledge of an interface may only complicate the problem of behavior: "Isn't this an 'interface' here? a meeting surface for two worlds . . . sure, but which two?" Another version of the interface metaphor occurs in association with thunder (455; also 731). Horst Achtfaden, musing on his interrogation by the Schwarzkommando, considers the possibility of staying at the edge of the thunderstorm, to catch the updrafts: "Right at the edge. Right here, at the interface, the air will be rising. You follow the edge of the storm, with another sense—the flight-sense, located nowhere, filling all your nerves . . . as long as you stay always right at the edge between fair lowlands and the madness of Donar it does not fail you, whatever it is that flies, this
carrying drive toward—is it freedom? Does no one recognize what enslavement gravity is till he reaches the interface of the thunder?" (455) The edge of the thunderstorm is another of Pynchon's assertions about the viability of living at the edge, at the periphery; just as Rocketman's domain in the "boondocks of the brain" (379) affords him the protection of anonymity, so Achtfaden envisions, in his native aerodynamic language-game, the updrafts by the storm which provide needed lift. The danger, of course, of loitering around the lightning or of being overtaken by the downpour is clear. At the periphery, perhaps, one may find "minimum grace" (603). The association of interface with thunder occurs in the Schwarzkommando's last rush to launch the 00001: "The decoy trek will move on northward, no violent shift in direction--the rest will angle east, back toward the Russian Army. If they get just close enough, the British and American armies may move more cautiously. It may be possible to ride the interface, like gliding at the edge of a thunderstorm . . . all the way to the end between armies East and West" (731).

The cumulative meaning of the term interface, then, is clearer: the interface is a physical connective point, plane, or space between Outside and Inside, the cortex, for example, or the transition between death and (presumed) afterlife. It then metaphorically represents, through the edge between different physical phenomena, e.g. thunderstorm and calm, the area where updrafts will support heavier-than-air craft, that is, a way of perpetual flight, or escape from gravity. Perhaps the most important possibility for the term is that it
may connect different orders of being.

The zone of intersection between different orders of being is general and all-inclusive: "... a point in space, a point hung precise as the point where burning must end, never launched, never to fall. And what is the specific shape whose center of gravity is the Brennschluss Point? Don't jump at an infinite number of possible shapes. There's only one. It is most likely an interface between one order of things and another" (302).

At Brennschluss, Pynchon tells us, the cutoff of thrust for the A4, the rocket changes from powered vehicle to ballistic, from a machine able to control its own path and make adjustments to an explosive device wholly under the control of gravity. The Brennschluss may be seen as analogous to the moment of death, for the rocket; it continues to follow its own momentum, and will go on to achieve whatever is planned for it, but its fate is set. To illustrate this analogy, consider the point of death (Brennschluss) for Peter Sachsa, Eventyr's "control" from the "other side":

... hasn't learned to hear with the revolutionary heart, won't ever, in fact, be given enough time to gather a revolutionary heart from the bleak comradely love of the others, no, no time for it now, or for anything but one more breath, the rough breath of a man growing afraid in the street, not even enough time to lose his fear in the time-honored way, no, because here comes Schutzmann Joche, truncheon already in backswing, the section of Communist head moving into view for him stupidly, so unaware of him and his power ... the Schutzmann's first clear* shot all day ... oh, his timing is perfect, he feels it in arm and out the club no longer flabby at his side but tensed back now around in a muscular curve, at the top of his swing, peak of potential energy ... far below that gray vein in the man's temple, frail as parchment, standing out so clear, twitching already with its next to last pulsebeat ... and, SHIT! Oh--how--

How beautiful! (220)
As is clear from the passage above, Pynchon's philosophical outlook has changed considerably from *V.*: death in *Gravity's Rainbow* is no longer a linear progression to the inanimate, but offers at least the possibility of transcendence, as in Peter Sachsa's death. For contrast, consider Porpentine's death in the third chapter of *V.*: "A flame appears in the area of the other's right hand; another flame; another. The flames are colored a brighter orange than the sun. Vision must be the last to go. There must also be a nearly imperceptible line between an eye that reflects and an eye that receives." 10 Death in *V.* is a diminishment to zero, from animate to inanimate, which in that novel is not so great a distinction—the individual embodiment of the entropic process which is the world's eventual end. But in *Gravity's Rainbow* the concept of death as change—"'Want the Change,' Rilke said, 'O be inspired by the Flame!'" (97)—rather than a diminishment to zero, or resolution to final tonic chord, is the governing metaphor.

*Gravity's Rainbow* is in part about transcendence, the movement from "death to death-transfigured" (167). Many lines from Rilke's *Duino Elegies* seem almost to be glosses on *Gravity's Rainbow*. J. B. Leishman quotes:

"In the elegies," Rilke wrote to his Polish translator, "Affirmation of Life AND Affirmation of Death reveal themselves as one. To concede the one without the other is, as is here experienced and celebrated, a restriction that finally excludes all infinity. Death is our reverted, our unilluminated, side of life: we must try to achieve the greatest possible consciousness of our existence, which is at home in both of these unlimited provinces, which is inexhaustibly nourished out of both . . . The true form of life extends through both regions, the blood of the mightiest circulation pulses through both:
there is neither a here nor a beyond, but only the great unity, in which the "Angels," those beings that surpass us, are at home.

Rilkean transcendence is both taken seriously in *Gravity's Rainbow*, as in the Sachsa passage quoted above, and extended into parody, as in the Weissmann subplot. There are valid and invalid means of transcending: Weissmann's involving submission and dominance, is the way associated with technology (737), while Slothrop's, I think, outside the milieu of society entirely, approaches more purely the status of being "simply here, simply alive" (230). The rocket's "life" (209) is a parody of true, organic life, which in its brief existence only furthers both the entropic process and manages to mangle people at the far end of the arc. Weissmann's love is the Heroic Transcendence of Western culture, the ultimate expression of technology as entropy-hastening, absurd, life-parodying process.

In preparing Gottfried for his final flight, Blicero declares "I want to break out--to leave this cycle of infection and death. I want to be taken in love: so taken that you and I, and death, and life, will be gathered, inseparable, into the radiance of what we would become. . . . "(724) Blicero's attempt to break the cycle of "the virus of Death" results in the launch of, not Blicero, but Gottfried; even in his ultimate act Blicero remains the supreme sadist. Slothrop's exile from society, on the contrary, involves plucking "the albatross of self" (712); he is one of the defectors (720-21) to the green world, one of the "presences that we are not supposed to be seeing," and while Seaman Bodine doesn't particularly think this is a good thing--"Rocketman, Rocketman. You poor fucker." (741) there is at least ambiguity, if not a positive value, to be seen
in Slothrop's end.

Suddenly, Pan--leaping--its face too beautiful to bear, beautiful Serpent, its coils in rainbow lashings in the sky--into the sure bones of fright--
Don't walk home at night through the empty country. Don't go into the forest when the light is too low, even too late in the afternoon--it will get you. Don't sit by the tree like this, with your cheek against the bark. It is impossible in this moonlight to see if you are male or female now. [. . .] What if he wakes and finds you've gone? He is now always the same, awake or asleep--he never leaves the single dream, there are no more differences between the worlds: they have become one for him. Thanatz and Margherita may have been his last ties with the old.
(720-21)

The interface between sleeping and waking, then, has become Slothrop's zone of residence. In his eventual location in the "boondocks of the brain," Slothrop occupies a safe zone somehow in the periphery of consciousness, like Thanatz and Ludwig, or like the Schwarzkommando moving towards the launch of the 00001.

The question of human identity and its value for the world may be deferred for the present; but the question of human effect on the world is answered just before the pastoral passage quoted above: "God's spoilers. Us. Counter-revolutionaries. It is our mission to promote death" (720). Men in Gravity's Rainbow advance entropy; therefore the diminishment of that role is seen as a good event. Slothrop, insofar as he represents the diminishment of the ego, is an advance towards living with, and in, the world; the Counterforce, by contrast, is weakened because they do not realize that "The Man has a branch office in each of our brains, his corporate emblem is a white albatross, each local rep has a cover known as the Ego, and their mission in this world is Bad Shit" (712-13). Slothrop, resident of one
order of things, deserts to the other order—in this case human/non-human life, or consciousness/unconsciousness. Tantivy's death, to suggest a more usual means of "defection," put Tantivy into a different order of things: he comes back, in Slothrop's dream, for a visit.

Everybody understands it's only a visit: that he will be "here" only in a conditional way. At some point it will fall apart, from thinking about it too much. [. . .]

"Why, Slothrop."
"Oh—where've you been, gate?"
"'Here.'"
"'Here'?"
"Yes, like that, you've got it--once or twice removed like that, but I walked in the same streets as you, read the same news, was narrowed to the same spectrum of colors. . . ."
"Then didn't you--"
"I didn't do anything. There was a change." (551-52)

Living and dead, then, are the usual equivalents for the two "different orders," though other possibilities occur: "They and We" (202), the "Face that is no Face" (222), or elite and preterite (495).

The interface as intersection between two worlds (668) extends back into Pynchon's earlier fiction: Jesus Arrabal gives Oedipa a similar definition:

"You know what a miracle is. Not what Bakunin said. But another world's intrusion into this one. Most of the time we coexist peacefully, but when we do touch there's cataclysm. Like the church we hate, anarchists also believe in another world. Where revolutions break out spontaneous and leaderless, and the soul's talent for consensus allows the masses to work together without effort, automatic as the body itself. And yet, señora, if any of it should ever really happen that perfectly, I would also have to cry miracle. An anarchist miracle. Like your friend. [Pierce Inverarity] He is too exactly and without flaw the thing we fight. In Mexico the privilegiado is always, to a finite percentage, redeemed—one of the people. Unmiraculous. But your friend, unless he's joking, is as terrifying to me as a Virgin appearing to an Indian."
Juxtaposition of two dissimilar worlds, then, comprises Pynchon's "miracle"; and juxtaposition of dissimilar realms of thought was noted as a characteristic part of Pynchon's fiction from the first. In *Gravity's Rainbow* Pynchon develops a spatial metaphor to fit the concept: the interface across the two orders of being can be death, as for Peter Sachsa (220) or Blobadjian (354-55); or a mystical experience of some sort, as for Slothrop (626); or, in the distinction between dream and waking states, it may be the "zero between waking and sleep"; film, too, serves as an interface between dual realities, filmed and audience (397). The pairs of orders joined by interfaces can be listed and recombined into the sort of multiplicity the V-symbols in *V.* represent; but the symbols here combine their effects, rather than detracting from the whole construction. In *V.* the reader is aware of Stencil's preoccupation, and allows for his status of schlemiel-Henry Adams; but in *Gravity's Rainbow* the connections are asserted by the narrative voice, for whom we have no character other than "Pynchon," and are made in such a tone as to be accepted as the novelist's own statement.

Another process by which "orders of reality" are joined is by the catalogs Pynchon uses to bring together diverse facts. Stencil's V-symbols might be one example of this; others exist to greater length in *Gravity's Rainbow*. There is for example the catalog of double-S symbols in the Mittelwerke:

To get to distance from acceleration, the Rocket had to integrate twice—needed a moving coil, transformers, [...] an elaborate dance of design precautions to get to what human eyes saw first of all—the distance along the flight path. [...] That is one meaning of the shape of the tunnels down here in the Mittelwerke. Another may be the ancient rune that stands for the yew tree, or Death. The double
integral stood in Etzel Olsch's subconscious for the method of finding hidden centers, inertias unknown, as if monoliths had been left for him in the twilight [. . . ].

Double integral is also the shape of lovers curled asleep, which is where Slothrop wishes he were now [. . . ] (301-02)

The double S sign is also connected with the SS; perhaps the most important connection of the double integral with rocket is that it stILLS its motion: "To integrate here is to operate on a rate of change so that time falls away: change is stilled. . . . 'Meters per second' will integrate to 'meters.' The moving vehicle is frozen, in space, to become architecture, and timeless. It was never launched. It will never fall" (301).

What these things have in common, all they have in common, is a geometric detail: their shapes function as a source for connection, i.e., as interfaces for their association by one who can perceive the pattern. In catalogs such as this one, it is the novelist, or the "voice" of the novel, who "makes it all fit," and who is responsible for the pattern as we have it. The pattern-maker, then, restores order to the violent disorder there before the pattern becomes clear. Patterns in Gravity's Rainbow are not inherently false, as in V.; paranoia may form a "network of all plots" which "may yet carry [Slothrop] to freedom" (603). The interface functions as the boundary and common zone between two or more discrete worlds; and it is the novelist who serves as the ultimate interface—the outside events of the novel took shape first on his own cortex, and it is through that connection that the novel came into existence. Connection, as we have seen, occurs through metaphor, and allows coherent systems of interpretation for the world.
Another boundary to two worlds important to Pynchon's fiction occurs in the paradigm of Maxwell's Demon--most important to *The Crying of Lot 49*, but present also in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Oedipa Maas finds that the entropy of thermodynamics and of communication are joined in the metaphor of Maxwell's Demon: "For John Nefastis [. . .] two kinds of entropy, thermodynamic and informational, happened, say by coincidence, to look alike, when you wrote them down as equations. Yet he had made his mere coincidence respectable, with the help of Maxwell's Demon. Now here was Oedipa, faced with a metaphor of God knew how many parts; more than two, anyway. With coincidences blossoming these days wherever she looked, she had nothing but a sound, a word, Trystero, to hold them together." With ultimate resources of communication--being a "sensitive," as Nefastis puts it--entropy can be countered. The Demon concentrates "warmer," i.e., faster-moving molecules in one cylinder, and the resultant temperature contrast can be made to do work, in the scientific sense. But Oedipa cannot put the pieces together, cannot contact the Demon. The area of common ground between the cylinders, over which the Demon's hegemony extends, the control of which is the key to reversing entropy, is metaphorically another interface.

Some characters in *Gravity's Rainbow* try to determine its action, and to that extent correspond to Maxwell's Demon, with varying degrees of success. The most obvious controller in the first two books is Edward Pointsman, the Pavlovian and determinist, who says of Slothrop: "'Whatever we may find,
there can be no doubt that he is, physiologically, historically, a monster. **We must never lose control.** The thought of him lost in the world of men, after the war, fills me with a deep dread I cannot extinguish. . . ." (144) Pointsman's attempts at control center on the White Visitation, through his manipulation of Brigadier Pudding (228), his control of Katje, and his influence on Roger Mexico through Jessica. Pointsman is obviously not in command, however, as his introduction to *Gravity's Rainbow*—the attempt to catch a dog in the East End—shows. In his vision at the end of Book Two (278), he weighs the possibility of being a determinist with the power to control statistical numbers of people, the exact role of Maxwell's Demon with gas molecules. Furthermore, his name refers to the British version of the switchman, who changes the "points" that determine the train's destination; the description, in the "Mr. Information" voice of the section, parodies nicely the Demon figure:

Skippy, you little fool, you are off on another of your senseless and retrograde journeys. Come back here, to the points. Here is where the paths divided. See the man back there. He is wearing a white hood. His shoes are brown. He has a nice smile, but nobody sees it. Nobody sees it because his face is always in the dark. But he is a nice man. He is the pointsman. He is called that because he throws the lever that changes the points. And we go to Happyville, instead of to Pain City. [...] The pointsman has made sure we'll go there. He hardly has to work at all. The lever is very smooth, and easy to push. Even you could push it, Skippy. If you knew where it was. But look what a lot of work he has done, with just one little push. He has sent us all the way to Happyville, instead of to Pain City. That is because he knows just where the points and the lever are. He is the only kind of man who puts in very little work and makes big things happen, all over the world. (644)
Pointsman, of course, makes an inept pointsman; he loses Slothrop entirely in the Zone, and eventually falls into political/bureaucratic disgrace because of Major Marvy's Operation. Fitting the paradigm, lack of communication is the key to Pointsman's failure.

Another character more or less appropriate as a Demon figure might be Enzian, who in his search for the "key" may be seen as a recycler, one who struggles against the elite dominance over the preterite. "Somewhere, among the wastes of the World, is the key that will bring us back, restore us to our Earth and our freedom" (525). Enzian is set forth as the polar opposite of Blicero—who represents, from his name through his characteristic preoccupation, association with death (721-724). Enzian is the mystic, the counter-Christian who establishes a new Text for interpretation: "What Enzian wants to create will have no history. It will never need a design change. Time, as time is known to the other nations, will wither away inside this new one. The Erd schweinhöhle will not be bound, like the Rocket, to time. The people will find the Center again, the Center without time, the journey without hysteresis, where every departure is a return to the same place, the only place. . . ." (318-19) He has a "vision," seeing the bombed refinery which is not destroyed but transmuted, redesigned by bombs (518-25), and is described as an anti-Blicero: "Manichaeans who see two Rockets, good and evil, who speak together in the sacred idiolalia of the Primal Twins (some say their names are Enzian and Blicero) of a good Rocket to take us to the stars, an evil Rocket for the World's suicide, the two perpetually in struggle" (727). But the whole question of what, if anything, is accom-
plished or recycled in the Schwarzkommando's rocket is ambiguous—
Simmon suggests that the 00001 carries Enzian himself. If
Enzian manages to reconstruct anything, it is through the Rocket
as Text:

"It comes as the Revealer. Showing that no
society can protect, never could—they are as foolish as
shields of paper. . . ." He must tell Christian every-
thing he knows, everything he suspects or has dreamed.
Proclaiming none of it for truth. But he must keep
nothing back for himself. Nothing is his to keep. "They
have lied to us. They can't keep us from dying, so They
lie to us about death. A cooperative structure of lies.
What have They ever given us in return for the trust,
the love—They actually say 'love'—we're supposed to
owe Them? [. . .] Before the Rocket we went on believing,
because we wanted to. But the Rocket can penetrate,
from the sky, at any given point. Nowhere is safe."

The Rocket as Revealer constitutes the final image of the
book's message, descending on the theater.

Another of the novel's Demon figures, modulating this time
between elect and preterite, is Gerhardt von Göll/der Springer.
Von Göll claims to know how "both sides" of his world work,
both directing and acting, with the camera as dividing point
between the two. Learning the patterns is the key for der
Springer, as for figures such as Blodgett Waxwing (257) and
Seaman Bodine (603): '"But mistakes are part of it too—
everything fits. One sees how it fits, ja? learns patterns,
adjusts to rhythms, one day you are no longer an actor, but free
now, over on the other side of the camera"' (494). Der Springer
succeeds, if he succeeds, in ordering his world because he knows
how patterns work. His nickname is derived from the German term
for the chess knight; and the knight provides an image of
his freedom: "'No dramatic call to the front office—just waking up one day and knowing that Queen, Bishop, and King are only splendid cripples, and pawns, even those that reach the final row, are condemned to creep in two dimensions, and no Tower will ever rise or descend—no: flight has been given only to the Springer!" (494). Because der Springer controls the actors on the other side of the camera, he is a determinist, just as Pointsman tries to be; this is the justification for considering von Göll as a Demon figure. Von Göll's particular form of hubris is that he considers himself a sower of "seeds of reality" (388) and thus tries to fertilize the Zone with his own creations, in particular an Argentine version of Martin Fierro. His last creation is New Dope, an endless movie being shown under the rug in "Der Platz" (745), the key to which is a kind of dope which renders the user incapable of communicating any idea of what its users feel. The final vision of der Springer, seated on a large-scale child's training toilet with a horse's head figure, spouting Sodium Amytal visionary gibberish, does not speak well for his success either as a determinist figure or a counter-entropic force.

In general, the mode of knowing the pattern does not bring success in Gravity's Rainbow, contrary to von Göll's assertions: there is too much data for full comprehension. A more successful procedure seems to be the way of transcendence through either submission or loss of identity, the way Slothrop, Enzian, and perhaps Gottfried take. The more Slothrop's "delta t" diminishes, the more he becomes aligned with the things of the world and less subject to control.
This loss of self is seen much more positively than in V., in which lady V. has become acquainted with "the Things in the Back Room."\textsuperscript{14} Things in that novel assume the appearance of a conspiracy against humanity; but things in \textit{Gravity's Rainbow} are subject to a dual interpretation, and may assert desirable traits in humanity, which have been negated or diminished by our preoccupations with technology and claims to dominance over creation (720).

Lyle Bland's conversion provides another instance of the dichotomy between technological and green worlds: Bland, who has been under contract for Tyrone Slothrop's surveillance, becomes acquainted gradually with the occult, and finally leaves his body inert on the couch, having made provisions for his family with the law firm of "Salitieri, Poore, Nash, De Brutus, and Short" (591). Bland manages to do away with the traditional concept of Earth as inert matter, a vision Pynchon has also come to in the novel:

Because it's hard to get over the wonder of finding that Earth is a living critter, after all these years of thinking about a big dumb rock to find a body and psyche, he feels like a child again [. . .] To find that Gravity, taken so for granted, is really something eerie, Messianic, extrasensory in Earth's mindbody [. . .]

The rest of us, not chosen for enlightenment, left on the outside of Earth, at the mercy of a Gravity we have only begun to learn how to detect and measure, must go on blundering inside our front-brain faith in Kute Korrespondences, hoping that for eacy psy-synthetic taken from Earth's soul there is a molecule, secular, more or less ordinary and named, over here--kicking endlessly among the plastic trivia, finding in each Deeper Significance and trying to string them all together like terms of a power series hoping to zero in on the tremendous and secret Function whose name, like the permuted names of God, cannot be spoken [. . .] to bring them together, in their slick persistence and our preterition . . . to make sense out of, to find the meanest sharp sliver of truth in so much replication, so much waste. . . . (590)
This is essentially the vision Oedipa was denied in *The Crying of Lot 49*—the key to the preterite America of her San Francisco vision, the right interpretation to the Text. Bland simply walks out of his body; and Pynchon's fiction is like Bland's vision—there is a pattern to be gleaned, when read rightly—but at the surface there are Kute Korrespondences to distract, wastes to transform, other worlds to perceive and wonder at, for those who can Get It. The more common experience is to be left on the periphery, on the outside of Earth or like Tchitcherine, always at the edge of a mystical vision. The text, however, exists, whether interpreted or not.

Pynchon's practice of direct address—in a sense, of breaking the illusion of his fiction—illustrates this concept of the Novel as Text. *Gravity's Rainbow* aspires to bring the reader into the confines of the fiction. Just as in the film *Alpdrücken*, which spawned film-children all over the Zone, there was an interface established between film and "real world," so the novel itself forms such an interface between its real world and ours. Just as the film had effects on the people who saw it, particularly Pökler, and just as film in general affects the lives of film buffs throughout the novel, so the novel itself may be supposed to elicit a similar response. The novel in effect gives us an image of its own effect in its version of modes of artistic process. "Distinctions are blurred," just as in the Zone, particularly in a novel which bases its "realism" on infinitesimally correct detail, and on inclusion of historical events and personalities—e.g., Malcolm X, John Kennedy, Harry Truman, Mickey Rooney, and, of course,
Richard M. Zhlubb.

An image of the interface between art and life is provided in *Gravity's Rainbow* in the situation comedy-cum-comic book tale of the Floundering Four (674-681). The two-dimensional, paranoiac world of the comics, and the process of plot and counterplot, are both folded back on themselves, like the twist in the Möbius strip:

For the first time now it becomes apparent that the 4 and the Father-conspiracy do not entirely fill their world. Their struggle is not the only, or even the ultimate one. Indeed, not only are there many other struggles, but there are also spectators, watching, as spectators will do, hundreds of thousands of them, sitting around this dingy yellow amphitheatre, [. . .] The women go on, playing cards, smoking, eating. See if you can borrow a blanket from Rose's fire over there, it's gonna be cold tonight. Hey--and a pack of Armies while you're out--and come right back, hear me? Of course the cigarette machine turns out to be Marcel, who else, in another of his clever mechanical disguises [. . .] What's this? What're the antagonists doing here--infiltrating their own audience? Well, they're not, really. It's somebody else's audience at the moment [. . .] (679-80)

In breaking the tenuous realistic illusion of the Floundering Four vs. the Paternal Peril by having the protagonists step down from the stage and into the Male Transvestites' Toilet, where the war goes on, Pynchon suggests that, by analogy, the novel and our world may not be so far apart, after all. The shift from theater to spectators suggests by metaphor that Rathenau's account of the world may not be so far from our own experience (166-67). "Outside and Inside," zoned on the surfaces of our individual cortices, may not be distinguishable any more: "Well, there is the heart of it: the monumental yellow structure, out there in the slum-suburban night, the never-sleeping percolation of life and enterprise through its
shell, Outside and Inside interpiercing one another too fast, too finely labyrinthine, for either category to have much hegemony any more" (681). This rapid interpiercing of Outside and Inside is symbolic justification for the various narrative intrusions of *Gravity's Rainbow*: these occur frequently enough not to require an exhaustive list, but some examples will be useful as illustration. The novel opens with a dream-evacuation which is at once applicable to the group in the caravan and to the individual dreamer, who turns out to be Pirate Prentice. "'You didn't really believe you'd be saved. Come, we all know who we are by now. No one was ever going to take the trouble to save you, old fellow. . . .'" (4). A similar tone is taken with Slothrop's memories, but turns up from the page with the second-person address: "It was being come for just before dawn by pranksters younger than he, dragged from bed, blindfolded, Hey Reinhardt, led out into the autumnal cold, shadows and leaves underfoot, and the moment then of doubt, the real possibility that they are something else—that none of it was real before this moment: only elaborate theatre to fool you. But now the screen has gone dark, and there is absolutely no more time left. The agents are here for you at last. . . ." (267). The association between dark theater, isolation, and paranoia will be continued in the "John Dillinger" passage (516-18). The technique forces reader identification with the character in a way which emphasizes the projection between novel and world:
Of all her putative fathers—Max Schlepzig and masked extras on one side of the moving film, Franz Pöklär and certainly other pairs of hands busy through trouser cloth, that Alpdrücker Nacht, on the other—Bianca is closest, this last possible moment below decks here behind the ravening jackal, closest to you who came in blinding color, slouched alone in your own seat, never threatened along any rookwise row or diagonal all night, you whose interdiction from her mother's water-white love is absolute, you, alone, saying sure I know them, omitted, chuckling count me in, unable, thinking probably some hooker . . . She favors you, most of all. You'll never get to see her. So somebody has to tell you. (472)

This is more than merely diverting a paranoid flight of fantasy up at the reader—this passage assigns responsibility to the reader for details within the novel. For such an equation to be made there must be a projective relationship between the events of the novel and the world proper.

The novelist's voice, shifting occasionally into colloquial address, provides a link with the traditional practice of the popular novelist addressing his circle of readers—as in the explanation of the "Otokungurua" phrase. "Yes, old Africa hands, it ought to be 'Omakungurua,' but they are always careful—perhaps it's less healthy than care—to point out that oma- applies only to the living and human. Otu- is for the inanimate and the rising, and this is how they imagine themselves" (316-17). Occasionally the narrative voice alludes to radio events: "(who's that tapping and giggling at your door, Fred and Phyllis?)" (711), or in the "Paranoid For The Day" sketch: "In fact it sounded like something right outa Hollywood? Well, Captain—yes. you, Marine Captain Esberg from Pasadena—you, have just had, the Mystery Insight! (gasps and a burst of premonitory applause) and so you—are our Paranoid . . . For The Day! (band burst into 'Button Up Your
Overcoat,' or any other suitably paranoid up-tempo tune, as
the bewildered contestant is literally yanked to his feet and
dragged out in the aisle by this M.C. with the gleaming face
and rippling jaw). Yes, it is a movie!" (691-92), and the un-
fortunate marine is sent to Rosavolgyi's "Puke-a-hook-a-look-i
Island." The novelistic Voice will at times lure the reader
into assumptions about itself and then shatter them:

At which instant, with no warning, the arousing
feather-point of the Sound-Shadow has touched you, en-
vveloping you in sun-silence for oh, let us say 2:36:18
to 2:36:24, Central War Time, unless the location is
Dungannon, Virginia, Bristol, Tennessee, [. . .]--yes
sounds like a Roll of Honor don't it, being read off
someplace out on the prairie [. . .]

Well, you're wrong, champ--these happen to be towns
all located on the borders of Time Zones, is all. Ha, ha!
Caught you with your hand in your pants! Go on, show us
all what you were doing or leave the area, we don't need
your kind around. There's nothing so loathsome as a
sentimental surrealist. (695-96)

Moreover, the novelistic voice frequently attacks current
problems, in the manner of Dickens or Thackeray, e.g. our
energy addiction--

It means this War was never political at all, the poli-
tics was all theatre, all just to keep the people distracted . . . secretly, it was being dictated instead by the
needs of technology . . . by a conspiracy between human
beings and techniques, by something that needed the
energy-burst of war, crying, "Money be damned, the very
life of [insert name of Nation] is at stake," but mean-
ing, most likely, dawn is nearly here, I need my night's
blood, my funding, funding, ahh more, more . . . (521)

--or as in the discussion cited above, about the human function as
hasteners of entropy (720). In such novelistic intrusions,
Pynchon establishes and breaks repeatedly the flow of the
narrative; he therefore may be said to be breaking the inter-
face of his fiction, that is, the area of intersection between
the World War II established in the novel and the reader's own
sense of the world at present, maintained, when it is maintained,
in the more "realistic" course of the narrative.

Group singing is another activity that inspires individual
participation, and isolation, within a community endeavor,
and Pynchon draws on this tradition at several points in
Gravity's Rainbow. The Advent chapter shows amply the para-
doxical nature of the community illusion and the human need to
maintain the illusion:

Come then. Leave your war awhile, paper or iron war,
petrol or flesh, come in with your love, your fear of losing,
your exhaustion with it. All day it's been at you, coer-
cing, jiving, claiming your belief in so much that isn't
true. Is that who you are, that vaguely criminal face
on your ID card, its soul snatched by the govern-
camera as the guillotine shutter fell—[. . .] Every-
boby you don't suspect is in on this, everybody but you:
the chaplain, the doctor, your mother hoping to hang that
Gold Star, the vapid soprano last night on the Home Service
programme, let's not forget Mr. Noel Coward so stylish
and cute about death and the afterlife, packing them into
the Duchess for the fourth year running, the lads in
Hollywood telling us how grand it all is over here, how
much fun, Walt Disney causing Dumbo the elephant to clutch
to that feather like how many carcasses under the snow	onight arong a Miraculous Medal, lucky piece of worn
bone, half-dollar with the grinning sun peering up under
Liberty's wispy gown, clutching, dumb, when the 88 fell—
what do you think, it's a children's story? There aren't
any. The children are away dreaming, but the Empire has
no place for dreams and it's Adults Only in here tonight
[. . .] for a baby to come in tippin' those Toledos at 7
pounds 8 ounces thinkin' he'd gonna redeem it, why, he
oughta have his head examined. . . .

But on the way home tonight, you wish you'd picked
him up, held him a bit. [. . .] As if it were you who could,
somehow, save him. For the moment not caring who you're
supposed to be registered as. For the moment anyway,
no longer who the Caesars say you are. (134-36)

The motifs of paranoia and tension between the appeal of the
community myths and individual rejection are present in the
sing-alongs of the book; the last chapter, in the "Orpheus Theater," is the culmination of such scenes and of Pynchon's interface between art and life. The section recapitulates the children's puppet show (175), musical pieces such as the "Loonies on Leave" (259), and the "glozing neuter" song (677). The rocket's target, with Gottfried as warhead, is the Orpheus Theater, and the direct address, the Paranoid's Muzak giving its dire message to each and every occupant in the theater, is Pynchon's last bridging of the gap:

The screen is a dim page spread before us, white and silent. The film has broken, or a projector bulb has burned out. It was difficult even for us, old fans who've always been at the movies (haven't we?) to tell which before the darkness swept in. [. . .] it was not a star, it was falling, a bright angel of death. And in the darkening and awful expanse of screen something has kept on, a film we have not learned to see . . . it is now a closeup of the face, a face we all know--

And it is just here, just at this dark and silent frame, that the pointed tip of the Rocket, falling nearly a mile per second, absolutely and forever without sound, reaches its last unmeasurable gap above the roof of this old theatre, the last delta-t.

There is time, if you need the comfort, to touch the person next to you [. . .] (760)

The parallels with Pirate Prentice's banana-picking expedition in the opening of the novel are clear enough: he also sees a star, in this case the rising rocket. The star here is a descending rocket, the Rocket, the one which finds you (you don't hear this one)--but there is time for a community song, by William Slothrop, on preterition. The links between the opening and the closing of Gravity's Rainbow suggest that the beginning rounds around, and the perpendicular aspects of the narrative indicate that the novel aspires to bring its readers
into its confines. Moreover, considering the parabola image and the suggestion that we all walk under its arc, the similarity of the beginning and ending suggest the endpoints of the parabola, and thus the rocket's flight is coincident with the book's duration, strengthening the equation of the book itself with the Rocket, the V.-too. *Gravity's Rainbow*, then, if one were to select a geometrical image for its structure, is not a Möbius strip but a Klein bottle, a three-dimensional space folded back over itself through a fourth dimension, so that everything is both inside and outside, at once. Distinctions are blurred, inside and outside interpierce, and the Zone extends to whatever range of consciousness one wishes to impute to it. The novel's interfaces, then, help to break down the distinctions between the novel itself and the world to which it constantly looks.
Notes to Chapter Four:

1. Thomas Pynchon, V., p. 50. Parenthetical references in the text refer to Gravity's Rainbow; italics Pynchon's unless otherwise noted; my ellipses inside brackets.

2. V., p. 2.


8. ibid.

9. Pynchon, V., p. 155-56: "'[The colors] stay with you,' he went on, 'they aren't fleecy lambs or jagged profiles. They are, they are Vheissu, its raiment, perhaps its skin."

   'And beneath?'
   'You mean soul, don't you. Of course you do. I wondered about the soul of that place. If it had a soul. Because their music, poetry, laws and ceremonies come no closer. They are skin too.'"

10. V., p. 82.


V: SEEDS OF REALITY: FILM IN GRAVITY'S RAINBOW

Our first acquaintance with Tyrone Slothrop in Gravity's Rainbow is through another of Pynchon's catalogs, this time of Slothrop's desk in the ACHTUNG office (Allied Clearing House, Technical Units, Northern Germany [17]):

Tantivy's desk is neat, Slothrop's is a godawful mess. It hasn't been cleaned down to the original wood surface since 1942. Things have fallen roughly into layers, over a base of bureaucratic smegma that sifts steadily to the bottom, made up of millions of tiny red and brown curls of rubber eraser, pencil shavings, dried tea or coffee stains, traces of sugar and Household Milk, much cigarette ash, very fine black debris picked and flung from typewriter ribbons, decomposing library paste, broken aspirins ground to powder. Then comes a scatter of paperclips, Zippo flints, rubber bands, staples, cigarette butts and crumpled packs, stray matches, pins, nubs of pens, [. . .] above that a layer of forgotten memoranda, empty buff ration books, phone numbers, unanswered letters, tattered sheets of carbon paper, the scribbled ukulele chords to a dozen songs including "Johnny Doughboy Found a Rose in Ireland" [. . .] (18)

This continues for roughly twice the length cited above. The category of objects proceeds not left to right or front to back, as in a cinematic pan, but from bottom to top, as if a set of screens sifted out first all but particles of smallest size, then let the next size through, and so on, up to the News of the World, on the top of the heap. This sort of catalog is a staple in Pynchon's fiction, as we have seen; it is frequently associated with the poor, preterite souls, as with the winter's leavings (626), or as in the cars Mucho Maas gets for trades-in in The Crying of Lot 49.¹ A similar list, too, receives the benefit of Roger Mexico's disgust at Pointsman; the conferees there "are still not quite willing to admit that this is happening, you know, in any world that really touches, at too many points,
the one they're accustomed to . . ." (636). What doesn't touch Pointsman's world, what one feels in such passages, is the debris of human lives, eloquently expressed through mute lists of dumb matter, tossed into the street or abandoned to fertilize desktops or the nadir beneath the back seat. Pynchon is accustomed to eliciting a great range of sympathy through a simple list of objects, as in the "Almanac" passage in V., quoted in an earlier chapter. Much of Pynchon's realism comes from historically accurate detail, cited at inordinate length, within the course of the fiction. In a sense, both Pynchon's realistic and fantastic impulses have parallels in film—realism from this impulse to detail, visually rendered, fantasy from what film critics describe as film's affinity with the unconscious. His catalogs rely for effect on a pseudo-photographic reproduction, and function in a way analogous to a slow pan of a complex crowd scene, e.g. as in the underworld crowd in Fritz Lang's M. This division of the thesis will consider the use of film in Gravity's Rainbow; film material occupies much of the events of the book and allows quick insights into characterization (a point of some importance in a novel with approximately 400 characters), and film suggests in turn a conceptual mode for the novel's processes. Here we shall focus alternately upon Pynchon's use of film as fictional material and on ways in which cinematic modes help structure the novel.

Near the end of the third book of Gravity's Rainbow, Katje Borgesius, idle because of demobilization's effects on "The White Visitation," finds some film canisters, prints of her first days in England, taken in Pirate Prentice's house,
together with prints of those prints being used for conditioning Octopus Grigori. At the end of the reel is a short film: "Spliced on at the end of all this, inexplicably, is what seems to be a screen test of Osbie Feel, of all people, There is a sound track. Osbie is improvising a scenario for a movie he's written, entitled: DOPER'S GREED" (533-34). Osbie says that the film would star Basil Rathbone and S.Z. Sakall, in a Western setting, discussing the reality of a midget German sheriff: "This interesting conversation goes on for an hour and a half. There are no cuts. The Midget is active the whole time, reacting to the many subtle and now and then dazzling points presented. Occasionally the horses will shit in the dust. It is not clear if the Midget knows that his reality is being discussed. Another of this film's artful ambiguities" (535). Katje correctly interprets the screen test as a message, and leaving "The White Visitation," finds Osbie Feel, among "a back room fitted out with telephones, a cork board with notes pinned all over desks littered with maps, schedules, An Introduction to Modern Herero"— (536) equipment of the Counterforce's headquarters.

The film's function, besides Pynchon's need to extract Katje from the White Visitation and establish the Counterforce, is to suggest that art forms may contain a Message, open to correct interpretation; an apparent absurdity, rightly decoded, has its effect in the book's world, and it is implied in ours as well. Katje's interpretation of the film's Meaning proceeds:
Osbie is looking straight into the camera: straight at her, none of your idle doper's foolery here, he's acting. There's no mistake. It is a message, in code, which after not too long she busts as follows. Say that Basil Rathbone stands for young Osbie himself. S. Z. Sakall may be Mr. Pointsman, and the Midget sheriff the whole dark grandiose Scheme, wrapped in one small package, diminished, a clear target. Pointsman argues that it's real, but Osbie knows better. Pointsman ends up in the stagnant trough, and the plot/Midget vanishes, frightened, into the dust. A prophecy. A kindness. (535)

Gravity's Rainbow furnishes within its immense bulk the proper mode for its own interpretation through its examples of the functioning of art: the principal media of art to be found within the novel are the recurrent processes of film (overlapping with situation comedy, television, radio, and theater as popular entertainment); and a consideration of Pynchon's use of film and popular art may yield the novel's interpretation, just as Katje derives a course of action from Osbie Feel's avant-gardiste film scenario.

Film is an extension of the concept of the interface, as can be seen by examining the Alpdrücken movie within the novel. Film mediates by its very nature between two "orders of reality," between the filmed and the viewers; and film provides Gravity's Rainbow's clearest example of how art works or is seen by Pynchon to work in the "real world." Film, finally, allows Pynchon to imitate within the course of the novel the effects of the novel— to establish and break the esthetic illusion of the fiction, so that in breaking it he attempts to reach out and enclose the "real world," the world of the reader.

Consideration of the book's intent to influence the world
of the reader will necessitate a long detour through a survey of film in *Gravity's Rainbow* and the implications of that use. The clearest example of a novelistic/cinematic/theatrical (several modes are combined) illusion being established and broken in *Gravity's Rainbow* is the episode of the Floundering Four plot, already discussed to some degree in the preceding chapter.\(^4\) The question of audience in the novel is too complex to be fully dealt with here, but one audience which surely appears is the novelist's film buffs—"old fans who've always been at the movies (haven't we?)" (760). Inside the comic book sequence with Slothrop and the "4" occurs a particularly noteworthy example of the mode of direct address to the reader in a tone similar to this "emcee's" voice:

Those whom the old Puritan sermons denounced as "the glozing neuters of the world" have no easy road to haul down, Wear-the-Pantsers, just cause you can't see it doesn't mean it's not there! [. . .] Glozing neuters are just as human as heroes and villains. In many ways they have the most grief to put up with, don't they? Why don't you, right now, wherever you are, city folks or out in the country, snuggled in quilts or riding the bus, just turn to the Glozing Neuter nearest you, even your own reflection in the mirror, and . . . just . . . sing,

How-dy neighbor, how-dy pard!
Ain't it lone-ly, say ain't it hard,
Passin' by so silent, day-after-day, with-out,
even a smile-or, a friendly word to say? [. . .]
Now ev'rybody-- (676)

Several modes of address are mixed here—-a common occurrence in Pynchon's novels, as noted previously. The mention of "Puritan sermons" suggests the division between elect and preterite which occupies so much of *Gravity's Rainbow*: the inclusive "you" is both singular and plural at once, as is the "you" in sermons. There is also the community sing-along
mode—a feature of camp meetings and the like, commercialized by music hall or vaudeville entertainers—and still current in the novel's present in the "follow the Bouncing Ball" shorts which spaced out afternoon newsreels. The closing line, "Now ev'rybody--" serves to pull the audience into song after the film's smiling organist has gone through the first verse; Pynchon uses it ironically at the novel's close. The "4" passage, as well as much of Gravity's Rainbow, shows parody turned to "serious" purpose, a consistent practice in Pynchon's fiction, occurring from "Entropy" on. "As the 4 suit up, voices continue singing for a while, depending how much each one happens to care--" (677). The sermonistic equivalent in the narrator's voice can perhaps be found in the essays against "the System," or "the Grid": "Walking in now among miles-down-the-sky shelves and food-mountains or food-cities of Icebox-land (but look out, it can get pretty Fascist in here, behind the candy-colored sweet stuff is thermodynamic elitism at its clearest—bulbs can be replaced with candles and the radios fall silent, but the Grid's big function in this System is iceboxery: freezing back the tumultuous cycles of the day to preserve this odorless small world, this cube of changelessness) . . ." (677-78) Serious parody: the narrative voice establishes one particular "picture" of the world, one mode of interpretation, only to mix it with others in the next paragraph or to dissolve it entirely. The effects this produces are perhaps similar to the crossed patterns of paranoia noted with Slothrop and Greta Erdmann: "Well.
What happens when paranoid meets paranoid? A crossing of solipsisms. Clearly. The two patterns create a third: a moiré, a new world of flowing shadows, interferences. . . ." (395). We are suddenly confronted with the awareness, inside the narrative voice, that the comic-book world is not the sole concern, at the moment, a realization perhaps meant to set up the same sort of dissonance, or a recognition of such dissonances by the narrative voice's "audience": "For the first time now it becomes apparent that the 4 and the Father-conspiracy do not entirely fill their world." The voice anticipates questions and writes into its own fabric answers to objections, much as does the "Mr. Information"voice in the tour of "Happyville" (644-47). The illusion established by the Four play is dispelled when they walk offstage; the effects of this are described by the narrative voice: "Well, there is the heart of it: the monumental yellow structure, out there in the slum-suburban night, the never-sleeping percolation of life and enterprise through its shell, Outside and Inside inter-piercing one another too fast, too finely labyrinthine, for either category to have much hegemony any more. The nonstop revue crosses its stage, crowding and thinning, surprising and jerking tears in an endless ratchet" (681). Pynchon's literalization of Jaques' "All the world is a stage" metaphor from As You Like It: the interface between spectator and actor is established and crossed repeatedly, until the stage drama brings about its effects on the audience's world. Film's influence on cognition may also be seen in Klaus Närrisch.
Närrisch and Slothrop have rescued der Springer from the Russians' custody, and Närrisch is fighting a delaying action while Frau Gnabh takes the rest of the party off in the boat. Pynchon draws a cinematic comparison with John Dillinger:

John Dillinger, at the end, found a few seconds' strange mercy in the movie images that hadn't quite yet faded from his eyeballs—Clark Gable going off unregenerate to fry in the chair, voices gentle out of the death-row steel so long, Blackie [. . .] even as bitchy little Melvin Purvis, staked outside the Biograph theatre, lit up the fatal cigar and felt already between his lips the penis of official commendation—and federal cowards at the signal took Dillinger with their faggots' precision . . . there was still for the doomed man some shift in personality in effect—the way you've felt for a little while afterward in the real muscles of your face and voice, that you were Gable, the ironic eyebrows, the proud, shining, snakelike head—to help Dillinger through the bushwhacking, and a little easier into death. (516)

What James Thurber converts to ironic comedy, Pynchon extends into a substantive statement of how popular art models the cognitive process. Närrisch, by contrast with Dillinger, has only another long-past movie, Fritz Lang's Der Müde Tod, whose ending—"the last Rilke-elegaic shot of weary Death leading the two lovers away hand in hand through the forget-me-nots"—doesn't help him a great deal. The way in which for Pynchon film, popular art, or perhaps art in general help to shape our cognition of the "real world" is perhaps best shown in Gravity's Rainbow in the story of Franz Pökler.

Pynchon's mode of entry into the Pökler subplot, however, is worth attention for the way in which it colors Pökler's tale itself. Slothrop has met, on the old set of Alpdrücke,
its star, Greta Erdmann, the "anti-Dietrich"—another paranoid, as noted in the "moire" quote above—and found that his alias on the ID card provided him by Säure Bummer, "Max Schlepzig," was the name of Greta's co-star in Alpdrücken. Slothrop, as is so frequently the case, connects with Greta Erdmann, and her undergarments provide Pynchon the opportunity of another expository passage, which prepares for the leap to come:

All Margherita's chains and fetters are chiming, black skirt furled back to her waist, stockings pulled up tight in classic cusps by the suspenders of the boned black rig she's wearing underneath. How the penises of Western men have leapt, for a century, to the sight of this singular point at the top of a lady's stocking, this transition from silk to bare skin and suspender! It's easy for non-fetishists to sneer about Pavlovian conditioning and let it go at that, but any underwear enthusiast worth his unwholesome giggle can tell you there is much more here—there is a cosmology: of nodes and cusps and points of osculation, mathematical kisses . . . singularities! [. . .] In each case, the change from point to no-point carries a luminosity and enigma at which something in us must leap and sing, or withdraw in fright. (396)

This is another catalog unifying by physical attribute, just as in Stencil's V-symbol passage. As Greta Erdmann and Slothrop approach climax, he mimics Max's sadistic role in the movie. The film has a peculiar effect upon its viewers: "the old phony rack groaning beneath them, Margherita whispering God how you hurt me and Ah, Max . . . and just as Slothrop's about to come, the name of her child: strained through her perfect teeth, a clear extrusion of pain that is not in play, she cries, Bianca. . . ." (397). Here the chapter ends; but for once the ellipsis is significant, for it leads across that film-interface, across the decade or so elapsing between filmed rape and the present in the Zone: the passage itself enacts a point of discontinuity, a change, or a singularity.
On the far side of the chapter division the quote picks up: 
"...yes, bitch--yes, little bitch--poor helpless bitch you're coming can't stop yourself now I'll whip you again whip till you bleed.... Thus Pökler's whole front surface, eyes to knees: flooded with tonight's image of the delicious victim bound on her dungeon rack, filling the movie screen-- [. . .] and Leni no longer solemn wife, embittered source of strength, but Margherita Erdmann underneath him, on the bottom for a change, as Pökler drives in again, into her again, yes, bitch, yes. . . ." (397). The identification across the screen forces a kind of unification between Bianca and Pökler's daughter; the night Pokler goes home from Alpdrücken is the night Ilse is conceived.

Only later did he try to pin down the time. Perverse curiosity. Two weeks since her last period. He had come out of the Ufa theatre on the Friedrichstrasse that night with an erection, thinking like everybody else only about getting home, fucking somebody, fucking her into some submission . . . . God, Erdmann was beautiful. How many other men, shuffling out again into depression Berlin, carried the same image back from Alpdrücken to some drab fat excuse for a bride? How many shadow-children would be fathered on Erdmann that night? (397)

Thus that leap across the ellipsis in a sense crosses the barrier between the film world of Greta Erdmann/Max Schlepzig, and that of "depression Berlin."

Pökler goes on in the chapter to detail how Ilse is somehow made "a film": "That's how it happened. A film. How else? Isn't that what they made of my child, a film?" (398). A further example of Pynchon's technique of duplicating film's mode of individual address through second-person speech occurs below, on the same page:
If there is music for this it's windy strings and reed sections standing in bright shirt fronts and black ties all along the beach, [...] the candleflame memories, all trace, particle and wave, of the sixty thousand who passed, already listed for taking, once or twice this way. Did you ever go on holiday to Zwölfkinder? Did you hold your father's hand as you rode the train up from Lübeck, [...] Were you frightened when the dwarf tried to hug you, was your frock scratchy in the warming afternoon, what did you say, what did you feel when boys ran by snatching each other's caps and too busy for you?

The possibility of fathering "shadow children" is extended, through one of Pynchon's more complex equations, to the book's own effect on the reader. Slothrop, on the Anubis, has been confronted with the possibility and responsibility of "love, invisibility" (470), and in the true Profane tradition has failed miserably. In his future days he will carry her image with him, another American film tradition, The Girl I Left Behind Me: "Of course Slothrop lost her, and kept losing her--it was an American requirement--out the windows of the Greyhound, passing into beveled stonery, green and elm-folded on into a failure of perception, or, in a more sinister sense, of will . . . ." (472). The loss, and impulse to reclaim, through another girl, a "reasonable facsimile," are a source of at least momentary agony to Slothrop:

Distant, yes these [memories] are pretty distant. Sure they are. Too much closer and it begins to hurt to bring her back. But there is this Eurydice-obsession, this bringing back out of . . . though how much easier just to leave here there, in fetid carbide and dead-canary soups of breath and come out and have comfort enough to try only for a reasonable facsimile--"Why bring her back? Why try? It's only the difference between the real boxtop and the one you draw for Them." No. How can he believe that? It's what They want him to believe, but how can he? No difference between a boxtop and its image, all right, their whole economy's based on that . . . but she must be more than an image, a product, a promise to pay. . . . (472)
Slothrop, then, rejects the sort of equation made between "film-children"! the difference, in contradiction to all he has been told by Them, is then turned perpendicularly, through direct address, to the reader's application: "Of all her putative fathers [. . .] She favors you, most of all" (472). Pynchon's technique of direct address is a novelistic equivalent for the direct address film or television made to each viewer; the members of the audience, though addressed collectively, are alone in confronting the film itself; communication occurs on a one-to-one basis. The frequent asides by the narrative voice may be Pynchon's equivalent for this process in film.

Film is associated in a purely technological sense with calculus, since both occur by breaking continuous functions up into frames in order to project an illusion of process: "There has been this strange connection between the German mind and the rapid flashing of successive stills to counterfeit movement, for at least two centuries--since Leibniz, in the process of inventing calculus, used the same approach to break up the trajectories of cannonballs through the air. And now Pókler was about to be given proof that these techniques had been extended past images on film, to human lifes" (407). How this is done is explained in the course of the section, the longest of Gravity's Rainbow. Weissmann arranges for Pókler to see his daughter each summer for a vacation at Zwölfkinder, a Nazi equivalent to Disneyland; he doubts, however, that she really is his daughter, since her appearance
seems to change from year to year. The yearly visits are thus equivalent to the frame-by-frame illusion of film. "So it has gone for the six years since. A daughter a year, each one about a year older, each time taking up nearly from scratch. The only continuity has been her name, and Zwölfkinder, and Pökler's love--love something like the persistence of vision, for They have used it to create for him the moving image of a daughter, flashing him only these summertime frames of her, leaving it to him to build the illusion of a single child . . . " (422). More important than the "reality" of Ilse's parentage is her image for Pökler; such is the case for all the various "film-children" of Gravity's Rainbow, Bianca, Ilse, and Gottfried. Bianca comes to represent the same sort of underground freedom for Slothrop as the gypsy-child for Dennis Flange in "Low-lands." Slothrop, however, misses his chance and walks out. Gottfried is identified with Ilse in a meeting at Zwölfkinder, the final year there: "Who was that, going by just then--who was the slender boy who flickered across her path, so blond, so white he was nearly invisible in the hot haze that had come to settle over Zwölfkinder? Did she see him, and did she know him for her own second shadow?" (429). This identification becomes more crucial in the novel's end, in Gottfried's ascent in the 00000--to be discussed later--but this identification establishes a precedent for the later.

In addition to this relatively serious thematic use of film in Gravity's Rainbow, there is frequent integration of movie themes into less serious, more parodic events.
Gerhard von Göll, for example, believes that his propaganda film for the Allies is responsible for the real Schwarzkommando: "Since discovering that Schwarzkommando are really in the Zone, leading real, paracinematic lives that have nothing to do with him or the phony Schwarzkommando footage he shot last winter in England for Operation Black Wing, Springer has been zooming around in a controlled ecstasy of megalomania. He is convinced that his film has somehow brought them into being. 'It is my mission,' he announces to Squalidozzi, with the profound humility that only a German movie director can summon, 'to sow in the Zone seeds of reality!'" (388). Pynchon's serious parody, again: for it is just the same sort of popular images which are given realistic treatment and integration into the "realistic" events of *Gravity's Rainbow*. While von Göll comes out badly in the novel, the concept he expresses here works for the novel: images, fictional concepts, dreams, or fantasies are liable at any given time to assert their existence within the "realistic" fabric of the novel. Outside and Inside, by the fourth book, are not to be distinguished.

The interrelation between the novel as artifice and as touchstone for the real world is established from the opening: a cinematic, nightmarish caravan. "It is too late. The Evacuation still proceeds, but it's all theatre. There are no lights inside the cars. No light anywhere. Above him lift girders old as an iron queen, and glass somewhere far above that would let the light of day through. But it's night. He's afraid of the way the glass will fall—soon—it will be
a spectacle: the fall of a crystal palace. But coming down in total blackout, without one glint of light, only great invisible crashing" (3). The escape is not out, "not a disentanglement from, but a progressive knotting into" (3). The crowd panic refines itself into an individual panic, into the dreamer's panic: "Underfoot crunches the oldest of city dirt, last crystallizations of all the city had denied, threatened to its children. Each has been hearing a voice, one he thought was talking only to him, say, 'you didn't really believe you'd be saved. Come, we all know who we are by now. No one was ever going to take the trouble to save you, old fellow. . . . '" (4). In this segment Pynchon catches the dual nature of the film address, at once to the audience collectively and on a one-to-one basis with the individual viewer, or in this case dreamer. Film is an expression of a solitary community, in which at times the individual ego is subsumed into some group expression, the film itself.  

From this low point of helplessness in the opening dream-scape, where the only course is to "lie still and wait" and speculate on "its" coming—the effect of terror is heightened by the fact that the reader at this point knows neither who "he" is nor what "it" is—comes the modulation: "Will the light come before or after? But it is already light. How long has it been light?" (4). From this transition the narrative moves into the waking thoughts and surroundings of Pirate Prentice. The opening scene, then, creating an atmosphere very like dark, German expressionist cinema,  

eases its effect by masking it after the fact in the consciousness of Pirate Prentice, who goes
about the specific activities of "banana breakfast." Thus Pynchon sets up immediately a contrast between underground forces in control and the early morning, lighter activities of Prentice, who "stands pissing, without a thought in his head" (6). A working title for the novel, according to W. T. Lhamon, was "mindless pleasures," and the conjunction between cinematic modes of apocalypse, the "Commando trick" of "emptying his mind," and perhaps Gravity's Rainbow's mysticism is clarified by the working title.

Pirate Prentice has a "Condition" which explains some of the significance of the opening: "might as well mention here that much of what the dossiers call Pirate Prentice is a strange talent for--well, for getting inside the fantasies of others" (11-12). The question of the novel's opening, then, is whose fantasies he is having at that point; presumably they are those of the audience of the Orpheus Theatre. Motifs we are accustomed to in film shape our consideration of the fiction, particularly through the first two books. Fantastic action, musical numbers (as in V., but even more outlandish), dance routines, names straight from a Marx brothers movie, and a large quotient of slapstick shape events throughout Gravity's Rainbow. Pirate's first waking act is to kick his cot on its casters against the wall, just in time to break Teddy Bloat's stuporous fall from the balcony. The sugary detail of Banana Breakfast is juxtaposed with Osbie Feel's aria, "Gather yer bloomin' arse up off the floor," stroking a banana held out his fly in triplets against 4/4 time. The form Pynchon follows here is the familiar Gilbert and Sullivan
introduction to the crew—but with prurient details no Victorian would have countenanced. Captain Pirate Prentice's passages function as a recitative to the choral actions of "Bartley Gobbitch, DeCoverley Pox, and Maurice ('Saxophone') Reed," who are pummeling, "in part with his own stout banana," Osbie Feel (8-9). A suggestion of Gilbert and Sullivan persists, too, in Pirate's name, as in The Pirates of Penzance; and the songs, such as

It's . . .
Colder than the nipple on a witch's tit!
Colder than a bucket of penguin shit!
Colder than the hairs of a polar bear's ass!
Colder than the frost on a champagne glass!

(11)

or the later song of Frau Gnahb, "'Fuck ye not with Gory Gnahb and her desperate enterprise'" (497-98), which fits the basic W. S. Gilbert meter and métier.

Some of Pirate's material, too, comes from film, as in the dance routine with "a walking stick with W. C. Fields' head, nose, top hat, and all, for its knob" (12), the Cary Grant persona of the "Kipling Period" (13), the "sumptuous Oriental episode" on "the sanjak of Novi Pazar," or the science-fictional liaison with the Adenoid (15-16). Film provides a quick and easy means of characterization for many of the 400-odd characters of Gravity's Rainbow: Thus for Roger Mexico and Jessica Swanlake Pynchon is able to invoke the tradition of the forties Romantic film. When Mexico stops the Pointsman's Jaguar beside a bicycle, "It was what Hollywood likes to call a 'cute meet'" (38) with "'Here love' brakes on in a high squeak, 'it's not backstage at the old Windmill
or something, you know'" (38-9). When Mexico backs the Jaguar over her bicycle by mistake, she tells him, dramatically: "'I'm in your power,' she cries. 'Utterly.'" The climactic phrase: "They are in love. Fuck the war!" (42). Later, when Jessica leaves with her fiancé for Nordhausen, the film characterization reaches its melodramatic high point: "Ta-ta mad Roger, it's been grand, a wartime fling, when we came it was utterly incendiary, your arms open wide as a Fortress's wings, we had our military secrets, we fooled the fat old colonels right and left but stand-down time must come to all, yikes! I must run sweet Roger really it's been dreamy. . . . " (628).

Slothrop's "American reflexes" are susceptible to film archetypes--the American come to England. Americans of course are tireless lovers (as in the foxtrot, "The Englishman's very shy, . . .")--thus the map Slothrop keeps on his office wall, with stars for girls: "'Some sort of harmless Yank hobby,' [Tantivy] tells his friend Bloat. 'Perhaps it's to keep track of them all. He does lead rather a complicated social life!'" (19). Slothrop is a "real sharp" dresser--Tantivy later is horrified with his Hawaiian shirt, or on another occasion, a tie with a nude figure that glows in the dark. Pointsman uses films as easy reference for Slothrop's American heritage. At one point in the Casino Hermann Goering, Katje squirts Slothrop with a seltzer bottle. "The what, The Seltzer Bottle? What shit is this, now? What other interesting props have They thought to plant, and what other American reflexes are They after? Where's those banana cream pies, eh?"
(197). Just as Pointsman is able to seize on film material for his efforts to program Slothrop, so Pynchon draws on the same material for characterization, not only with Slothrop but with other characters as well.

Slothrop himself succumbs occasionally to the temptation to reach back into his cultural heritage for modes of behavior, as in the love song, "Too Soon to Know":

So who's to say
If joyful love is just beginning,
Or if it's day
Just turned to night, as Earth went spinning?
Darling, maybe so--
It's TOO SOON TO KNOW.

"Knowing what is expected of her, she waits with a vapid look till he's done, mellow close harmony humming a moment in the air [. . .]" (196). Part of Pynchon's parody, however, is that he continues just a moment or two past the point where the cameras usually fade out, to catch her "zipper, bring it snarling down her spineline. [. . .]"(196), and Slothrop's paranoid reflections which neither camera nor soundtrack can convey. The morning after the love song, Slothrop's pants are stolen, and there ensues a chase which ends with his falling out of a tree, wrapped in a purple blanket, into the center of General Wivern's croquet game—the absurdity of which would ornament any of several Marx brothers or Woody Allen movies. At least one "American reflex" They, i.e., Pynchon, have (has) managed to touch is the chase scene, an integral part of movies since The Great Train Robbery. Elements of slapstick in particular dominate Slothrop's progress through the first half of the book. Besides the incident of the seltzer bottle cited above, and the chase scene sans culottes, there is
Slothrop's escape from Major Marvy's Lewd Limericians by pelting their engine cowling with custard pies. Slapstick, too, is the metaphor Saure Bummer uses to reach Slothrop in his discussion of cocaine dealing in Germany without potassium permanganate: "'Well, without that Purpurstoff you can't deal cocaine honestly. Forget honesty, there just wasn't any reality. Last winter you couldn't find a cc of permanganate in the whole fucking Reich, Kerl. Oh you should have seen the burning that was going on. Friends, understand. But what friend hasn't wanted to—in terms you can recognize—push a pie in your face? eh?'" (375). Bummer summarizes Berlin at this time as "a gigantic Laurel and Hardy film," because of the cocaine substitutes being sold—even milk powder, presumably a more expensive substitute, simply for the satisfaction—"'the idea was that someone should get a sudden noseful of milk, hahahahahl' breaking up here for a minute, 'and that was worth the loss!'"

Slapstick gives way on occasion to musical set pieces such as the "Loonies On Leave" passage (259), cabaret songs such as "Victim in a Vacuum" (414), "bouncing ball" numbers (677), tap dance routines—

What does happen now, and this is quite alarming, is that out of nowhere suddenly appear a full dancing-chorus of Herero men. They are dressed in white sailor suits designed to show off asses, crotches, slim waists and shapely pectorals, and they are carrying a girl all in silver lame, a loud brassy dame after the style of Diamond Lil or Texas Guinan. As they set her down, everyone begins to dance and sing:

Pa-ra-noooiiaa, Pa-ra-noia!

Ain't it grand to see, that good-time face, again! [. . .]

Then Andreas and Pavel come out in tap shoes (liberated from a rather insolent ENSA show that came through in July) to do one of those staccato tap-and-sing numbers:
Para-noi—(clippety-clippety-clippety clo[ya,]op!)  
Para-noi—(shuffle stompl! shuffle stompl! shuffle stompl!  
[and] clo[ya,]op! clickety clo[Ain't]ick) it grand (clop)  
ta (clop) see (clippyclop) yer good-time face  
again! etc.  

(which must have been well received by the typesetting crew  
at the Viking Press) and so on. These blend into the flow  
of the narrative exactly as do the episodes of the book  
proper, and any seemingly routine observation by a character  
may serve as a springboard for self-parody or quasi-cinematic  
elaboration upon the character. Effects of the alternation  
between cinematic character and song are several: first,  
obviously, humor--Pynchon clearly enjoys such permutations in  
the fabric of the novel; second, it converts the novel itself  
into a pastiche of popular films of the '40s, so that the  
reader's sense of the time scheme is confused--the events  
are World War II, all right, but with a seventies sensibility  
and a paranoid view of interlocking corporations, nations,  
and forces perhaps derived from growing up with Richard Nixon.  
Juxtaposition of World War II events with present political  
perspectives allows an updated consideration of that war in  
the light of our present experience--as when Ensign Morituri  
waxes nostalgic about his hometown, Hiroshima. Third, it pre¬  
pares Pynchon's audience for the climactic equation between  
novel and film, world and Orpheus Theater, paranoid threat  
and descending rocket.

In addition to its importance within the course of the novel,  
film also serves as an implicit feature in the structure of  
Gravity's Rainbow. The progression of events in the narrative  
tends to be episodic in nature, a common feature of films;
transitions often follow modes used in film montage; and juxtaposition, commonly used in films to develop contrasts and similarities in characters and events in film, is a recurrent feature of Pynchon's fiction.

Perhaps the initial reaction to reading *Gravity's Rainbow* for the first time may be best described as disorientation: progressing from the crystal palace nightmare, to Pirate Prentice's *maisonette*, the reader may justifiably ask, who are these people, who is going to be important in this 750-page novel, and what is this happening? Much the same process occurs in *V.*, in which Stencil's importance to the book's structure does not emerge until the seventh chapter. Some conception of how the events of the novel are unified, then, is important to our grasp of its meaning. In *Gravity's Rainbow* the diverse events of Pynchon's World War II are all centered on Tyrone Slothrop: in the first book he emerges from the ACHTUNG (later, PISCES) bureaucracy, and the tentative cause-and-effect relationship between erection and rocket explosion is made by Pointsman; the second book features Pointsman's efforts to program Slothrop, and Slothrop's escape into the Zone; the third section develops the concept of the Zone as a region of infinite possibility and further Slothrop's dissolution of purpose; the fourth book details the development of the "Counter-force," Slothrop's conversion into a Pan or Orpheus figure, and the relevance of the book's events to present concerns. *Gravity's Rainbow* is essentially a picaresque, whose episodes are brought together around the character of one fairly young man, a man to whom things happen, with a fairly large proportion of sexual fantasy and violence; in the process of the book,
the novel's picaro fades out, loses all trace of his identity or selfhood. The resultant conclusion can be read as a fictional analysis of the Loss of Identity observed in contemporary literature. Just as the modern world fragments with the disappearance of Christianity, according to Henry Adams at least, so the novelistic world of Gravity's Rainbow fragments when its center, Tyrone Slothrop, loses whatever characteristics and presence of mind give him his identity.

More discussion will be directed to the significance of Slothrop's end in Gravity's Rainbow in the concluding chapter; the concern here is not so much with Slothrop himself as with the novel's structure. The events of the novel are episodic, united through the presence of Slothrop or their significance to him. The episodic story form, insofar as it is more directly imitative of our experience, is a more "realistic" form than more highly structured narratives, and is more closely aligned to procedures in film montage. The process of joining film clips into a more unified presentation is known as montage.9 (Usually the term refers to technical tours de force in which wildly variant film clips follow each other in close succession, so that the images produce an effect upon the viewer different than either would produce singly.) There are general guidelines to the placement of film clips in montage which afford some unity to the technique: juxtaposition of film segments, long or short, with changes in perspective due to camera placement, with unity of place but lapse in time, with simultaneity but in different places, with past events, as in a flashback, inter-
spersed with present sequences—these are basic uses of montage in film. Pynchon's juxtaposition of chapters within his fiction, particularly within *Gravity's Rainbow*, may be seen to follow guidelines similar to montage in film—although this probably isn't unique to him. In book one, for example, Roger and Jessica resort to off-limits areas "in a defiance which they can never measure unless they're caught" (41); this is followed by Pointsman's and Mexico's clumsy attempts to catch a dog in a similar area for a lab specimen; and this is followed by further development of the determinist/statistician contrast between the two men, shown in the context of their bungling attempts to capture the dog. Juxtaposition helps to clarify contrasts and similarities between characters in this fashion. Another example might be found in the last four chapters of "In The Zone": Slothrop gets information from Pökler about Jamf, which symbolically connects Pökler's mind, the Rocket technician, to Fritz Lang movies and to Jamf's "National Socialist chemistry"—"[. . .]*Metropolis*. Great movie. Exactly the world Pökler and evidently quite a few others were dreaming about those days, a Corporate City-state where technology was the source of power, the engineer worked closely with the administrator, the masses labored unseen far underground, and ultimate power lay with a single leader at the top, fatherly and benevolent and just, [. . .] yet, at the end, the untamable lion who could let it all crash, girl, State, masses, himself, asserting his reality against them all in one last roaring plunge from rooftop to street. . . ."—which is then followed and contrasted by Lyle Bland's secession from Them; by Sloth-
rop's refuge with Bodine and "Solange," who turns out to be Leni Pokler, at "Putzi's"--and the possibility of other "plots," one of which gets Major Marvy--and finally a board room scene of Them discussing Pointsman's snafu and disgrace. Perception of patterns in *Gravity's Rainbow* is not necessarily to be distrusted, either for the reader or for the characters--in fact, recognition of patterns, a characteristic activity of paranoia for Pynchon, is a necessary mode of conception for dealing with the world of the Zone. "Oh, that was no 'found' crab, Ace--no random octopus or girl, uh-uh. Structure and detail come later, but the conniving around him now he feels instantly, in his heart" (188). The problem of formulating structures adequate to experience will be examined in the final chapter.
Notes to Chapter Five:

   "Films, then, tend to weaken the spectator's consciousness. Its withdrawal from the scene may be furthered by the darkness in movie houses. Darkness automatically reduces our contacts with actuality, depriving us of many environmental data needed for adequate judgments and other mental activities. It lulls the mind..."
Kracauer also notes affinities between cinema and various drugs: "[.. .] from the 'twenties to the present day, devotees of film and its opponents alike have compared the medium to a sort of drug and have drawn attention to its stupefying effects—incidentally, a sure sign that the spoken word [i.e., the addition of sound] has not changed much. Doping creates dope addicts. It would seem a sound proposition that the cinema has its habitués who frequent it out of an all but physiological urge. They are not prompted by a desire to look at a specific film or to be pleasantly entertained; what they really crave is for once to be released from the grip of consciousness, lose their identity in the dark, and let sink in, with their senses ready to absorb them, the images as they happen to follow each other on the screen." Kracauer's thesis happens to apply nicely to the diminishment of self motif in *Gravity's Rainbow*.
5. *V.*, p. 50.
6. cf. Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1947), p. 3-11, for a full discussion of this point. There are of course differences in the degree of individual involvement, varying with the person and the film; and differences of opinion among film critics themselves.
7. cf. for example the underground or crowd scenes in Lang's *M.* or *Metropolis*.
9. Rudolf Arnheim, *Film as Art* (Berkeley, Cal.: University of California Press, 1957), p. 87-102, discusses montage. Montage in the American usage refers more specifically to alternation between spatially distinct or temporally distinct film sequences; I have extended the term somewhat to apply to fiction, in something closer to the British use of the term.
VI: THE BOONDOCKS OF THE BRAIN: ON WHAT IT MEANS TO BE "IN THE ZONE"

If there is something comforting—religious, if you want—about paranoia, there is still also anti-paranoia, where nothing is connected to anything, a condition not many of us can bear for long. Well right now Slothrop feels himself sliding onto the anti-paranoid part of his cycle, feels the whole city around him going back roofless, vulnerable, uncentered as he is, and only pasteboard images now of the Listening Enemy left between him and the Wet Sky. (434)

Pynchon's Zone is a non-Euclidean space of uncertain dimensions which is characterized by just such oscillations as Slothrop undergoes on his cycle. Problems of discerning reality and fantasy become complicated in the course of Gravity's Rainbow: Pointsman's first wave of dread comes when he finds that apparently none of Slothrop's "stars" existed in fact (271-72). Such distinctions, in the course of the novel, become inoperative, indistinguishable. The Zone is an area in which reality is provisional.

This problem of making distinctions is established in the chapter's epigraph: "'Toto, I have a feeling we're not in Kansas any more..." (279). As Dorothy steps out of her tornado-transported house into Oz, she steps into a technicolor world where dreams are very close indeed to reality: munchkins direct her to the yellow-brick road, and she meets a personable scarecrow, a tin man without a brain, and a cowardly lion. The only threat, the Wicked Witch of the West, is easily disposed of. In the Zone of Gravity's Rainbow,
distinctions are confounded between what is at first taken to be the reality of the novel, i.e., World War II England, and dream, fantasy, and film, among other possibilities. Slothrop's sexual encounters are indistinguishable from his fantasies: there is a preponderance of young girls, such as Geli Tripping, Bianca, or the anonymous girl of the first section of "In the Zone"; at one point Slothrop achieves a "nasal hardon" (439), and at another he is said to be "inside the metropolitan organ entirely" (470). The Zone therefore is a region of infinite possibility for fantasies and for their "realization": "'In the openness of the German Zone, our hope is limitless'" (265), says Squalizadozzi, an expatriate Argentine in Zurich. "Then, as if struck on the forehead, a sudden fast glance, not at the door, but up at the ceiling—'So is our danger!'" (265). So it is for all the occupants of the Zone: "Here in the Zone categories have been blurred badly" (303), and the novel's "fantasy" and "reality" are both provisional, a fact which has its advantages and disadvantages for the characters.

To live in the world, it is implied, it is necessary to learn to perceive structures, i.e., some rational or irrational ordering of events. To do otherwise is to invite the prospect of "anti-paranoia." The Zone at the time of the novel is a field in which old structures have been torn down, and their replacements are not yet erected. Fantasies of various sorts may be put into effect—e.g. von Göll's "seeds of reality," Enzian's Text and launch of the 00001, Slothrop's quest for
freedom, or the Counterforce's "creative paranoia"—before the boundaries stiffen. It is no longer imperative for Pynchon that the structures coincide with "what is the case," as in V.--they should provide a means of interpreting events and relating them to the self, but in the protected pockets of the Zone, e.g. der Platz, bizarre forms of solipsism can exist and function well within the Zone. There are structures, conceptual models, which advance life as a whole, and structures which advance entropy: Gravity's Rainbow juxtaposes the two systems.

Slothrop in his movement through the Zone contacts many of its pockets of paranoia; the Zone represents an area in which different states or orders of reality can exist congruently. Pynchon's concept of the Zone accrues its meaning bit by bit, just as does his device, the interface. The Zone, first, is occupied Germany after V-E Day, a chaos of displaced Germans, Americans, Russians, British, and French, to which Pynchon has wryly added Hereros from South-West Africa, at least one Kazakh, a smattering of Argentine revolutionaries, a Japanese Anglophile, at least two siege parties of decadent rich, an Appaloosa maintained in Eurasia by a Midland, Texas oil man, mad dopers, black marketeers, rival debating devotees of Rossini and Beethoven, apprentice witches, Good Ol' Boys, "film children"—representative members of virtually every group of human beings except Just Plain Joes. The chapter opens before the Potsdam conference, and matters of hegemony are not yet rigid: "'Forget frontiers now. Forget subdivisions. There aren't any'" (294), Geli tells Slothrop on almost his "first day Outside" (256). "'It's an arrangement,' she
tells him. 'It's so unorganized out here. There have to be
arrangements. You'll find out.' [. . .] Slothrop, though he
doesn't know it yet, is as properly constituted a state as
any other in the Zone these days. Not paranoia. Just how it
is. Temporary alliances, knit and undone" (290-91). The pro-
visional reality of the Zone refers specifically to governments,
however; when taken on a personal level, bizarre things
occur. "Signs will find [Slothrop] here in the Zone, and an-
cestors will reassert themselves. It's like going to that
Darkest Africa to study the natives there, and finding their
quaint superstitions taking you over" (281). Getting along
in the Zone is a matter of improvisation. Slothrop's strength,
and also his Fatal Flaw, is his adaptability: he adapts too
well to the provisional realities of the Zone, so much so that
his own integral personality begins to diffuse into fragments
(742).

The Zone, moreover, is itself Gravity's Rainbow's largest
interface, comprised of non-integrated pockets of vastly in-
congruous worlds. "'There are no zones [. . .] No zones but
the Zone'" (333), Schnorp tells Slothrop as they escape from
Marvy's Mothers in a balloon. The "reality" we have become
accustomed to in the first two books will be increasingly
distorted; "surrealistic" narrative, fairly infrequent in the
first two books, 1 will become the rule, rather than the ex-
ception, in the third and particularly the fourth books.
"Outside and Inside interpierc[e] one another too fast,
too finely labyrinthine, for either category to have much
hegemony any more" (681)—and "categories have been blurred badly" in such basic distinctions as living and dead (303).

In Pynchon's earlier fiction this state would correspond to an area of high entropy, in which chaos was the "rule," and from which one might be led to believe little or no energy could be derived. But in *Gravity's Rainbow* Pynchon's vision has become increasingly complex; the "wastes of the world" (525) are to be recycled, new organic structures are to be formed, and the metaphor governing this aspect of the Zone is the compost heap. The first chapter of *Gravity's Rainbow* features Pirate Prentice's hothouse, on the roof of his "Chelsea maisonette," to which he trudges to pick bananas for breakfast. The roof has over the centuries accumulated a mass of topsoil—

[. . . ]pharmaceutical plants up on the roof [. . . ], a few of them hardy enough to survive fogs and frosts, but msst returning, as fragments of peculiar alkaloids, to rooftop earth, along with manure from a trio of prize Wessex Saddleback sows quartered there by Throp's successor, and dead leaves off many decorative trees transplanted to the roof by later tenants, and the odd unstomachable meal thrown or vomited there by this or that sensitive epicurean—-all got scumbled together, eventually, by the knives of the seasons, to an impasto, feet thick, of unbelievable black topsoil in which anything could grow, not the least being bananas. (5)

By means of saplings brought from South America, the topsoil is converted to bananas up to a cubit in length, which are not only a sensation due to the wartime banana shortage, but provide a less tangible, perhaps more mystical beneficial effect:

Now there grows among all the rooms, replacing the night's old smoke, alcohol and sweat, the fragile, musaceous odor of Breakfast: flowery, permeating, surprising, more than the color of winter sunlight, taking over not so much through any brute pungency or volume
as by the high intricacy to the weaving of its mole-
cules, sharing the conjuror's secret by which—though
it is not often Death is told so clearly to fuck off—
the living genetic chains prove even labyrinthine enough
to preserve some human face down ten or twenty generations
[. . .] so the same assertion-through-structure allows
this morning's banana fragrance to meander, repossess,
prevail. (10)

This passage serves as paradigm for the anti-entropic action
of life in Gravity's Rainbow: life's processes organize its
own wastes into usable, in this case almost magical, form.
Pirate Prentice's banana hothouse is a literal example of the
"hothouse" paradigm discussed in chapter one; but plants
succeed where human reconstructions fail. In the usual
hothouse procedures, men seal themselves off from the present
in order to deal with the past, i.e., to make a symbolic
reconstruction of events into some "assertion-through-structure"
—yet in Pynchon's fiction this action is futile. Callisto
fails both to revive the bird and to counter even on a small
scale the heat-death he perceives approaching; Stencil's
reconstructions bring him no closer to V.7—"Stencil himself,
who seemed more unaware each day (under questioning) of what
was happening in the rest of the world, reinforced Maijstral's
growing theory that V. was an obsession after all, and that
such an obsession is a hothouse: constant temperature, wind-
less, too crowded with particolored sports, unnatural blooms"2;
Oedipa Maas, too, has to leave her tower of tapestries to con-
front the recyclable organization of down-and-outs she finds
on her night in San Francisco—and then the meaning of what she
finds is in doubt.3 Where human attempts at reconstruction
fail, however, the literal reconstruction of plants, of
life itself, succeeds, to some degree; the paragraph concludes "Is there any reason not to open every window, and let the kind scent blanket all Chelsea? As a spell, against falling objects. . . ." (10).

Not all structures are beneficial, however: in Gravity's Rainbow the paradigm—order staving off entropy—is complicated by scientific and/or technological imitations, which mimic, and perhaps win acceptance as, the Real Thing. Walter Rathenau, in his seance, glosses this succinctly: "'The best you can do is polymerize a few dead molecules. But polymerization is not resurrection'"(166). On a larger scale, Rathenau goes on from the immediate molecular consideration to bureaucracies, industries, and cartels as themselves imitative of life: "'You think you'd rather hear about what you call "life": the growing, organic Kartell. But it's only another illusion. A very clever robot. The more dynamic it seems to you, the more deep and dead, in reality, it grows. [. . .] The persistence, then, of structures favoring death. Death converted into more death. Perfecting its reign, just as the buried coal grows denser, and overlaid with more strata—epoch on top of epoch, city on top of ruined city. This is the sign of Death the impersonator!'" (166-67). "Death the impersonator" rules in the character of the Rocket itself: the power that gives the A4 flight is compared to the sexual urge: "She was pleased, once, to think of a peacock, courting, fanning his tail . . . she saw it in the colors that moved in the flame as it rose off the platform, scarlet, orange, iridescent green . . . there were Germans, even SS troops, who called the rocket Der Pfau—'Pfau Zwei!' According, programmed in
a ritual of love . . . at Brennschluss it is done—the Rocket's purely feminine counterpart, the zero point at the center of its target, has submitted. All the rest will happen according to laws of ballistics. The Rocket is helpless in it. Something else has taken over. Something beyond what was designed in" (223).

There is an evident preference in *Gravity's Rainbow* for pastoral ideals: Slothrop, in turning to the German countryside in book four, reflects this preference for the structures of life rather than those of technology, apotheosized in "Der Raketen-Stadt." Not only do the structures of life use recycled waste, i.e., compost: those of death use such wastes as coal and coal-tar derivatives, as Rathenau points out in the seance quoted above, from which come first dyes, then plastics, then some synthetic drugs, the latter two especially powerful presences in *Gravity's Rainbow*. Human actions, particularly actions of Western culture and technologically advanced states, are portrayed as imitative of life, to the point of parody, and destructive of life. Perhaps the definitive early example is Katje's ancestor, Frans Van der Groov (110-112), whose actions in helping exterminate *Didus ineptus* are called "the purest form of European adventuring" (111).

Plastics are the technological equivalent of skin; thus, the passage "Some Characteristics of Imipolex G" describes that ultimately sensuous plastic as itself "erectile," and the robot guide to "Happyville" chews plastic gum: "The squat creature is actually chewing gum, a Laszlo Jamf variation on polyvinyl chloride, very malleable, even sending out
detachable molecules which, through an ingenious Osmo-elek-trische Schalterwerke, developed by Siemens, is transmitting, in code, a damn fair approximation of Beeman's licorice flavor to the robot crab's brain" (646). The alternative to the Raketen-Stadt is provided, in book four, by the green world Geli Tripping seeks out: "It's golden-dark, almost night. The region is lonely and Pan is very close. Geli has been to enough Sabbaths to handle it--she thinks. But what is a devil's blue bite on the ass to the shrieking-outward, into stone resonance, where there is no good or evil, out in the luminous spaces Pan will carry her to? Is she ready yet for anything so real?" (720). Effects of the natural world are described in terms equally applicable to the rocket flight Gottfried will make later; specifically the "shrieking-outward" and discussion of "something real" (754). The passage continues: "it was the equinox . . .: green spring equal nights . . .: canyons are opening up, at the bottoms are steaming fumaroles, steaming the tropical life there like greens in a pot, rank, dope-perfume, a hood of smell . . . human consciousness, that deformed and doomed thing, is about to be born" (720). This green world is animate, spirited, dominated by the presence of Pan: humans are about to desecrate the garden, however. "Alive, it was a threat: it was Titans, was an overpeaking of life so clangorous and mad, such a green corona about Earth's body that some spoiler had to be brought in before it blew the Creation apart. So we, the crippled keepers, were sent out to multiply, to have dominion. God's spoilers. Us. Counter-revolutionaries. It is our mission to promote death"
Insofar as it is alive and organic, the vegetable is preferable to the human, which furthers the cause of death and of entropy: "you know that in some irreducible way it's an evil game. You play because you have nothing better to do, but that doesn't make it right" (364). This view of the human role is a change from V.--where the inanimate is seen as a threat to the animate--and a key to the iconography of Gravity's Rainbow. Chaos, therefore, can be subverted and turned to the ends of life; or contrariwise, life can be dominated and turned to the furtherance of entropy. The first action is that of the natural, organic world, the second that of technology.

The Zone, then, insofar as it is emblematic of a kind of fertile chaos, is an area of infinite possibility. New structures may spring up, favoring life or hastening its decline; new connections may be devised, either restricting freedom or making it possible for the canny(603). One paradigm for the sum of states of existence which is the Zone (though not the only one) might be found in Slothrop's escape in the balloon:

Providence has contrived to put in their way a big white slope of cloud, and the wind is bringing them swiftly into it: the seething critter puts out white tentacles, beckoning hurry . . . hurry . . . and they are inside then, inside its wet and icy reprieve [. . .] Schnorp is fiddling with the flame, a rose-gray nimbus, trying for less visibility, but not too much loss of altitude. They float in their own wan sphere, without coordinates. Outcrops of granite smash blindly upward like fists into the cloud, trying to find the balloon. The plane is somewhere with its own course and speed. There is no action the balloon can take. Binary decisions have lost meaning in here. (335)
In the cloud Slothrop and Schnorp find both shelter through anonymity and danger, both from Marvy and from mountains; the same sorts of clouds have served earlier in the same section as a screen for Geli's and Slothrop's "God-shadows" (330). The cloud is associated perhaps with Roger Mexico's domain "between zero and one" (55) by the fact that "Binary decisions have lost meaning . . ." i.e., there can be no determinism without identity and location, no cause and effect. Slothrop's improvisation—"Without planning to, Slothrop has picked up a pie. 'Fuck you.' He flings it, perfect shot, the plane peeling slowly, and blop gets Marvy right in the face. Yeah" (334)—pulls him through again.

The Zone, however, is not constant, but ever-changing, depending in part on just where in the Zone you happen to be and in part on the drift of events. In a field of maximum possibility, events have more or less equal chances for being "the case"; for future possibilities are limited by past events. This means that as time progresses, and as more permanent order is resumed in the Zone, possibilities and the chances for freedom will decrease as a function of time. Thus Oedipa's anguished thought: "How had it ever happened here, with the chances once so good for diversity?" is given fuller development in Gravity's Rainbow. Enzian, as leader of the Schwarzkommando, is forced to make decisions—and every choice he makes necessarily limits his future decisions and thus his capability to make decisions.
And now [Pavel's] head in Christian's steel notch at 300 yards. Suddenly, this awful branching: the two possibilities already beginning to fly apart at the speed of thought—a new Zone in any case, now, whether Christian fires or refrains—jump, choose—

Enzian tries his best—knocks the barrel aside, has a few unpleasant words for the young revenger. But both men saw the new branches. The Zone, again, has just changed, and they are already on, into the new one. . . . (524)

Contingencies, branches, wrong turns—all these are involved in Pynchon's analysis of what went wrong, and his subject is not the Zone, nor his year 1945, but America, in the present. The Zone is, perhaps, a way back—"Back out of all this now too much for us," in Robert Frost's "Directive"—through the Slothropite heresy of William Slothrop, whose significance is his tract On Preterition, the opposite pole from what Pynchon suggests is the determining factor of our present situation: the predominance of the "elect":

Could [William Slothrop] have been the fork in the road America never took, the singular point she jumped the wrong way from? Suppose the Slothropite heresy had had the time to consolidate and prosper? Might there have been fewer crimes in the name of Jesus, and more mercy in the name of Judas Iscariot? It seems to Tyrone Slothrop that there might be a route back—maybe that anarchist he met in Zürich was right, maybe for a little while all the fences are down, one road as good as another, the whole space of the Zone cleared, depolarized, and somewhere inside the waste of it a single set of coordinates from which to proceed, without elect, without preterite, without even nationality to fuck it up. . . . (556)

This, finally, is Pynchon's fullest statement of what it means to be in the Zone—a state of full-blooming possibility—of freedom—with all the crushing responsibility that implies. Interpretation of how Slothrop himself has reacted to the challenge will depend largely upon the reading one gives to his dissolution of personality the suggested recreation of
different fragments into independent personae (742). One reading might be that it is Western man's sense of his Self, his ego, which is behind the notion of elect and preterite, and thus at the basis of the whole mess Pynchon sees in present-day America. Thus, Slothrop's end could be an exemplary diminishment of ego; a further possibility is that of defection to the "other side," and a third is that of redemptive sacrifice.

The consideration of Slothrop's end will require a survey of references to the fact, more or less in order of disappearance. Early in the Zone, he takes a tour of the underground city, the Mittelwerke, which inspires the "urban fantods":

It is hard down here in the Mittelwerke to live in the present for very long. [. . .] our flesh doesn't sweat and pimple here for the domestic mysteries, the attic horror of What Might Have Happened so much as for our knowledge of what likely did happen. . . . it was always easy, in open and lonely places, to be visited by Panic wilderness fear, but these are the urban fantods here, that come to get you when you are lost or isolate inside the way time is passing, when there is no more History [. . .] Down here are only wrappings left in the light, in the dark: images of the Uncertainty. (303)

The underground in Fritz Lang's Metropolis was associated with technology, the source of power, which made the Future City go; Slothrop's horror of machinery seems to stem from this tour. History, we have seen in the case of V., is inadequate because falsifying; no more history, as well, inspires a state of dread like that of antiparanoia, agoraphobia, fear of "open places" and of spirits which may reside in the wilderness associated with Pan. The expérience results not from...
pulsion from other forces, but from the opposite—"'But think of the free-dom?' sez Merciful Evans. 'I can't even trust myself? can I. How much freer than that can a man be? If he's to be sold out by anyone? even by himself you see?'

'I don't want that--' 'You don't have a choice.'" (543).

Pirate Prentice and Katje here are, in Sartre's phrase, condemned to be free; Slothrop's fate is more that of the preterite—the Fool, the only card in the Tarot deck without number, and therefore without sequence. 7

In effect, Slothrop leans to live with contingent existence, and succeeds too well: Slothrop, talking to Enzian, first learns of the possibility of men's learning a "sense of statistics for our being" (362): "'There are even now powerful factions in Paris who don't believe we [the Schwarzkommando] exist. And most of the time I'm not so sure myself. '

'How's that?' 'Well, I think we're here, but only in a statistical way. Something like that rock over there is just about 100% certain—it knows it's there, so does everybody else. But our own chances of being right here right now are only a little better than even—the slightest shift in the probabilities and we're gone—schnapp! like that!'" (361-62).

From the Herero experience with von Trotha in 1904, Enzian and the others have developed the ability "to stand outside our history and watch, without feeling too much" (362). Enzian gives Slothrop a mantra, "'Mba-kayere. It means "I am passed over"'" (362). Later, on the Potsdam trip, Rocketman-né-Slothrop will put this chant and the concept of his own improbability in that place, that time, that guise, to good use:
You can feel the impedance in the fading day, the crowding, jittering wire loops, Potsdam warning stay away . . . stay away . . . the closer it comes, the denser the field [. . .].

Invisible. It becomes easier to believe in the longer he can keep going. [. . .] Their preoccupation is with forms of danger the War has taught them—phantoms they may be doomed now, some of them, to carry for the rest of their lives. Fine for Slothrop, though—it's a set of threats he doesn't belong to. [. . .] They don't know about Rocketman here. They keep passing him and he remains alone, blotted to evening by velvet and buckskin—if they do see him his image is shunted immediately out to the boondocks of the brain where it remains in exile with other critters of the night. . . . (379)

Slothrop's status as a live, walking, three-dimensional version of a comic book character allots him some measure of invulnerability; appropriately, it is Tchitcherine who nabs him with the hashish, Tchitcherine who himself is used to being on the "periphery." Pynchon also makes use of the image in the Mittelwerke where "the goat-god's city cousins wait for you at the edges of the light" (303), and in Tchitcherine's Kirghiz Light experience: "About the paranoia often noted under [Oneirine], there is nothing remarkable. Like other sorts of paranoia, it is nothing less than the onset, the leading edge, of the discovery that everything is connected, everything in the Creation, a secondary illumination—not yet blindingly One, but at least connected, and perhaps a route In for those like Tchitcherine who are held at the edge. . . ." (703). The "leading edge" refers back to Achtfaden's internment on the Rücksichtslos, in which the edge of the thunderstorm made heavier-than-air flight possible, and ahead to Gottfried's shroud in the 00000: "When something real is about to happen to you, you gettoward it with a transparent surface parallel
to your own front that hums and bisects both your ears, making eyes very alert. The light bends toward chalky blue. Your skin aches. At last: something real. Here in the tail section of the 00000, Gottfried has found this clear surface before him in fact, literal: the Imipolex shroud" (754). Ludwig is unnoticed by the Schwarzkommando because of his status at the edge (733), just as they escape detection by the Allies by moving at the interface. These images are important, of course, only because of Pynchon's assertion that "everything is connected" and because of his penchant for leading the reader to make the connections.

Slothrop, however, is privileged in having a mystic vision of a sort. His ostensible justification for being in the Zone is to find the rocket, and in particular the Schwarzgerät, and thereby to find the key to his own past and a "way in"; in the course of his wanderings in the Zone, however, he loses track of the object of his quest. "Slothrop and the S-Gerät and the Jamf/Imipolex mystery have grown to be strangers. He hasn't really thought about them for a while. [. . .] Rain drips, soaking into the floor, and Slothrop perceives that he is losing his mind" (434). Slothrop has the opportunity for life in a redeemed underground with Bianca, similar to Dennis Flange in "Low-lands"; but he blows his chance. "'I'm a child, I know how to hide. I can hide you too." He knows she can. He knows. Right here, right now, under the make-up and the fancy underwear, she exists, love, invisibility. . . . For Slothrop this is some discovery.
But her arms around his neck are shifting now, apprehensive. For good reason. Sure he'll stay for a while, but eventually he'll go, and for this he is to be counted, after all, among the Zone's lost" (470). Upon the surface world of the Zone, corresponding in this sense to the Street, Slothrop finds "the news [. . .] going on without [him]" (507), and his identity thins: "Slothrop, as noted, at least as early as the Anubis era, has begin to thin, to scatter. 'Personal density' [. . .] 'is directly proportional to temporal bandwidth.' 'Temporal bandwidth' is the width of your present, your now. [. . .] the narrower your sense of Now, the more tenuous you are" (509). Thus, as Slothrop comes to live more and more in the present, to lose contact with his history and with History per se, his self begins to dissipate. This is the fate, for Pynchon, of those who live always in the Street, for example Benny Profane.

Slothrop later makes some attempt to remember his quest, but is diverted by an impulse to sing:

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Nonono come on, Jackson, quit fooling, you got to concentrate. . . . The S-Gerät now--O.K., if I can find that S-Gerät 'n' how Jamf was hooked in, if I can find that out, yeah yeah Imipolex now . . . --searchin' for a (hmm) cellar full of saffron . . .
Aw . . .
At about which point, as if someone's simple longing has made it appear, comes a single needle-stroke through the sky: the first star.
Let me be able to warn them in time. (561-62)
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The immediate referent of "them" here is the Schwarzkommando; however, the change in tone from the song which has thinned out Slothrop's "concentration" suggests that it may well be us whom he is trying to warn, as well. The crisis for Slothrop comes in the opening section of book four, when he reaches his
"crossroads," his mystical vision. Tchitcherine has noted in the preceding chapter that a coming together of opposites signaled his own approach to the Kirghiz Light (610-11). Slothrop's own opposites might be the last longings of the "albatross of self" (623) to return home to America and the fear of surveillance which has driven him into the Zone, the fear of his own past—"The coupling of 'Jamf' and 'I' in the primal dream" (623).

Crossroads are intersections, usually perpendicular, in the Street. Pynchon manipulates the symbol of the cross at other places in the novel: Pokler waits at the center of the A4 target site because ostensibly it's the "safest place" (426); the crossroads might be associated with the "fork in the road America never took" (556), and through that with "points of discontinuity," or "cusps." Associations along this pattern, or towards constructing this pattern, could be extended considerably—the correspondences are there if you want them to be. What is clear from Slothrop's experience here, at least, is his growing sensitivity to signs and mystical symbols, uniting him somehow to nature:

Crosses, swastikas, Zone-mandalas, how can they not speak to Slothrop? He's sat in Säure Bummer's kitchen, the air streaming with kif moirés, reading soup recipes and finding in every bone and cabbage leaf paraphrases of himself [. . .] He used to pick and shovel at the spring roads of Berkshire, April afternoons he's lost, 'Chapter 81 work,' they called it, following the scraper that clears the winter's crystal attack-from-within, its white necropolizing [. . .] days when in superstition and fright he could make it all fit, seeing clearly in each frozen object an entry in a record, a history: his own, his winter's, his country's [. . .] and now, in the Zone, later in the day he became a crossroad, after a heavy rain he doesn't recall, Slothrop sees a very thick rainbow here, a stout rainbow cock driven down out of pubic clouds into Earth, [. . .] and he stands crying, not a thing in his head, just feeling natural. (625-26)
Slothrop here attains a kind of mystic unconsciousness, in which his identity with nature grows precisely as his connections with society thin. There exists a correspondence between the diminishment of the "albatross of self" and some suggested redemptive factor, through Slothrop, for the rest of us: Slothrop has defected, has gone over to the "other side" (720), and is to be looked for "among the Humility, among the gray and preterite souls, [. . .]adrift in the hostile light of the sky, the darkness of the sea. . . ." (742). The diminishment, "plucking," is further glossed by Pynchon: "The Man has a branch office in each of our brains, his corporate emblem is a white albatross, each local rep has a cover known as the Ego, and their mission in this world is Bad Shit" (712-13). That Slothrop's "assembly" went awry, then, is likely to be a point in his, and our, favor: "There is also the story about Tyrone Slothrop, who was sent into the Zone to be present at his own assembly--perhaps, heavily paranoid voices have whispered, his time's assembly--and there ought to be a punch line to it, but there isn't. The plan went wrong. He is being broken down instead, and scattered" (738). The scattering, however, is described in terms, and with "fisher king" overtones, reminiscent of the Isis and Osiris myth. "Some believe that fragments of Slothrop have grown into consistent personae of their own. If so, there's no telling which of the Zone's present-day population are offshoots of his original scattering" (742). There is the possibility, further, that one of these fragments may be Gottfried--both Gottfried and Slothrop are afflicted with persecuting father-
figures, in Pernicious Pop or Jamf for Slothrop and Blicero, for Gottfried; and both are connected with Imipolex G and the Rocket. "Back in a room, early in Slothrop's life, a room forbidden to him now, is something very bad. Something was done to him [. . .]" (208-09); Slothrop finds out later that his father was involved:

"Schwarzvater" is the code word for "B. S." Which, barring the outside possibility of Bull Shit, seems to be Slothrop's own father, Broderick. Blackfather Slothrop. Nice way to find out your father made a deal 20 years ago with somebody to spring for your education. [. . .] Well, now, what was the deal between his father and Bland? I've been sold, Jesus Christ I've been sold to IG Farben like a side of beef. [. . .]

The fear balloons again inside his brain. It will not be kept down with a simple Fuck You. . . . A smell, a forbidden room, at the bottom edge of his memory. He can't see it, can't make it out. Doesn't want to. It is allied with the Worst Thing.

He knows what the smell has to be: [. . .] he knows that what's haunting him now will prove to be the smell of Imipolex G. (286)

Slothrop's fear of his father is translated into comic guise in the Floundering Four plot: "He's a cheerful and a plucky enough lad, and doesn't hold any of this against his father particularly. That ol' Broderick's just a murderin' fool, golly what'll he come up with next---" (674). Gottfried suffers under a father-son relationship with Blicero: "'Can you feel in your body how strongly I have infected you with my dying? I was meant to: when a certain time has come, I think that we all are meant to. Fathers are carriers of the virus of Death, and sons are the infected. . . .'" The solution for Gottfried and Blicero is through an extension of the sado-masochism which governs their relationship: Gottfried is to be launched.

"'I want to break out--to leave this cycle of infection and death. I want to be taken in love: so taken that you and I,
and death, and life, will be gathered, inseparable, into the radiance of what we would become. . . ." (723-24). Slothrop's solution is escape, not submission; but he and Gottfried share similar problems. Because of the connections and frequent "interfacings" between dream, fantasy, hallucination, film, and myth in the novel, the identification of Slothrop and Gottfried here would not be impossible; and if one goes a step further with the Fierce Father-Sacrificial Son analogy, as in the subchapter "Isaac," the possibility of yet another Pynchonian trinity emerges, featuring Blicero as father bringing about the launch, Gottfried/Slothrop the son, who perish so that we might have the Message, and the rocket itself (the Text, or the book itself) as the Holy Ghost, the ironic Comforter, or the bringer of Pentecost. Whatever connections of this kind are to be made are speculative, however, and exist by way of possibility. In Gravity's Rainbow no correspondences are too fantastic to be entertained, and in the Zone the wildest fictional events are likely to serve, in von Göll's terms, as "seeds of reality." The title for the chapter of The Crying of Lot 49 published in Esquire may license such an interpretation: "The World (This One), the Flesh (Mrs. Oedipa Maas), and the Testament of Pierce Inverarity."

The method of Gravity's Rainbow, then, is to provide a climate for interpretation of its events into a coherent meaning—and the climate is the Zone, neither temperate nor polar, composed of a fertile admixture of real and fantastic events, conflicting systems of interpretation, and the dominant impulse to read rightly the Text of the world. Pynchon
intends to give the reader enough information to develop such a system, without giving enough so that clear, unambiguous meaning can be determined. Not all the connections are there; an imaginative leap is necessary to combine the final elements into a "paranoid structure worthy of the name" (582). Ambiguity is at the heart of Pynchon's method—this is the principal difference between the cosmologies of Gravity's Rainbow and V. In V, all things without exception are on a linear trek towards the final state of "Entropy," "when thirty-seven degrees Fahrenheit should prevail both outside and inside, and forever, and the hovering, curious dominant of their separate lives should resolve into a tonic of darkness and the final absence of all motion." In contrast to this, there is in Gravity's Rainbow disorganization which is positive, the compost heap, as well as negative; organization which is negative, the Firm, as well as positive. The Augustinian demon of Pynchon's early works has shifted, under pressure, as Norbert Wiener has suggested is the tendency, to a covert Manicheanism, and there are in Pynchon's later fiction diabolical opponents to be contended with. From one convenient unifying symbol for the decay of all life, V., which nonetheless assumes all the attributes of unfeigned chaos, to a melting-pot of plots, counterplots, forces, counterforces, organic growths, and inorganic imitations, Pynchon's vision has proliferated into a multiplicity of possible interpretations for the events of the fiction. And it is this multiplicity that we must learn to live with.

In constructing a montage of possibilities, Pynchon
invites the reader to assemble the partial revelations into a superstructure varying across levels of human society, across geographically separated cultures, across orders of life, death, inanimate matter, spiritism, and to arrange them into a holistic perception of the world, of all that is the case. The significance of "naming" in Gravity's Rainbow may bear on Pynchon's intent in the novel: Enzian as a boy speaks to Blicero: "We make Ndjambi Karunga now, omuhona . . . a whisper, across the burning thorn branches where the German conjures away energies present outside the firelight with his slender book. He looks up in alarm. The boy wants to fuck, but he is using the Herero name of God. An extraordinary chill comes over the white man. He believes, like the Rhenish Missionary Society who corrupted this boy, in blasphemy. [. . .] Tonight he feels the potency of every word: words are only an eye-twitch away from the things they stand for." (100). Later Enzian reflects on the Hereros' situation in the north, in Germany: "North is death's region. There may be no gods, but there is a pattern: names by themselves may have no magic, but the act of naming, the physical utterance, obeys the pattern. Nordhausen means dwellings in the north. The Rocket had to be produced out of a place called Nordhausen." (322). Pynchon elicits patterns, by the act of naming them; he provides neither the structure of those perceptions nor the methodology but insights towards a "leading edge": the naming of the rocket brings the rocket into being, inside a conceptual model, a picture of the world. The Zone, finally, becomes congruent with the world.
Notes to Chapter Six:

1. Pirate Prentice's opening fantasy and the "Kenosha Kid" chapter are virtually the only two segments.
Bibliography: Literary:


Bibliography: Extra-Literary:


